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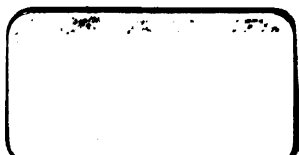
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JILTED!
OR,
MY UNCLE'S SCHEME.

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OR,

MY UNCLE'S SCHEME.

A Novel, in Three Vols.

VOL. II.



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JILTED!

OR,

MY UNCLE'S SCHEME.

MY UNCLE'S SCHEME.

CHAPTER I.

Creepmouse. "In love a young man should climb—not stoop. Yes, sir, to a young man like Tom, marriage should be a ladder, not a pit."

Retired from Business.

My uncle Dick amply vindicated his brother's eulogium of his conversational powers. When, at the bank, I had beheld the stout, big form of my relative, and heard his bluff and highly familiar language, I believed him to be as nearly related to a boor as any man of his size and age can be. But my opinion of him

underwent a very remarkable change when I listened to and watched him as he sat and talked at his brother's dinner-table. His manner then was perfectly polite; positively there were certain points in his behaviour which my father might have beheld with envy and admiration. Added to this, he was exceedingly well read; talked French with a good accent, and quoted Latin with a happy applicability that robbed its employment of all flavour of pedantry.

I had nothing to say. I was eclipsed. His jokes kept us all in high spirits. His anecdotes (which I can appreciate better now than I could then) were uniformly excellent. He appeared to know everybody; spoke with a kind of dignified familiarity of noblemen of reputation, of famous actors, of celebrated authors.

He had supped with Lamb and Elliston. He had been in Haydon's studio when Scott had called; he had advised Southey on the purchase of some stocks; he had dined with Rogers, where he had met Sydney Smith, William Bankes, Luttrell, and many others, whose names I forget.

I am very much afraid, however, that we none of us listened to him with the interest he deserved. Speaking for myself, it would have given me more pleasure to have heard an account of a champion billiard-match or a boat-race, than the best of Talleyrand's mots, or the smartest of Sydney Smith's rejoinders. My aunt smiled occasionally, as much out of politeness as out of appreciation; and uncle Tom grew so soon tired of these stories—which I daresay he had often heard before—that he contrived to bring

the conversation round to the Stock Exchange, the income tax, and the stamp duties, on which his brother talked as freely and sagaciously as if these matters had been his only studies all his life.

However, don't suppose that I sat like a mute through that dinner. When my uncle addressed me I contrived to answer him in a style that, I had no doubt, maintained my credit with my aunt. One reply of mine—I forget what it was, and I am very glad I do—made the old gentleman burst into a tremendous roar of laughter, and from that moment he took a great deal of notice of me, encouraged my small attempts to exhibit my parts and wit, and took wine with me, nodding his head with a cordial smile, and crying out, before he put the

glass to his lips, how he wished the major made one of us.

After my aunt and Conny had left the room, we three gentlemen grew really affectionate. The two brothers shook hands several times with each other, and several times with me, from no other reason whatever, than an overflowing impulse. Old days were recalled and old scenes re-enacted. While my uncle Dick fished one beaming recollection after another out of the grey tide of the past, my uncle Tom was watching him eagerly to observe when he stopped, in order to top the reminiscence with another. Some characteristic anecdotes of my father were repeated and roared over. Then my uncle Dick, having laughed himself grave, grew sentimental, spoke with hazy eyes of his dead wife, of his pet Teazer, who

was dear to him as his right hand, as the apple of his eye; of departed friends, whose wit had often cheered, whose kindness had often soothed him. Never an ill word for dead or living fell from him.

A bright scene! a happy evening! a pleasant and gracious memory—when the world was younger with him who writes this—of cordiality and good will, of brotherly love as fresh and childlike still as ever it was in the old nursery days! Shall we believe, Eugenio, all that the cynics tell us? Do relations so universally hate one another as these gentlemen make out they do? You have told me of aunts who have been as faithful in the love of their dead sisters' offspring as ever their mothers were; I have told you of brothers whose self sacrifices for one

another would fill a volume with tales of deeper interest than could even be found in narratives of the most awful murders, or in minute accounts of the most unblushing bigamies. Should a cynic expectorate after tasting a glass of Madeira, would you accept his spittle as a sample of the wine he has drunk? Neither should you regard the instances he relates to you of family feuds as typical of the actual feelings that bind relations one to another.

“And now, my boy,” said uncle Dick to me, “when are you coming to Thistlewood?”

“Name a day convenient to yourself,” I replied, “and then uncle Tom will perhaps give us his sense of the matter.”

“Never mind the bank,” exclaimed

uncle Tom, "go whenever you like, and stop as long as you like."

"I shall return from London on Thursday," said uncle Dick, "and, if you'll come to me on that day, say so, and I'll send a telegram to Teazer to-morrow, to have a bed-room prepared for you."

"Let me say Monday," I answered. "That will give your daughter more time."

"Very well. Tom will give you full directions as to the how and the where?" And this being settled, we got talking of other things.

I grew tired at last of sitting, and wanting to join Conny, hinted that my aunt might think us rather selfish, if we lingered much longer over our cigars.

"That's true," said uncle Tom, "so you go and join the ladies, and tell

my wife, Dick and I will follow presently."

Conny was reading a novel. My aunt knitted.

"What's the name of your book?" I asked, going up to my cousin, and sitting down near her.

"'Love and Sorrow,'" answered she. "They sent it this afternoon from the library. It is very interesting."

I took up volume the second, and opening it, caught sight of a passage which I read aloud: "Their eyes met. In her's was pride struggling with womanly desire. In his were blazing those wild passions which were the fruit of long years of agony and disappointment. 'By heavens!' he cried hoarsely, while the veins stood out upon his forehead, black and knotted, 'I would rather take

you by the throat and cast you dead at my feet, than see you Lord Algernon's wife. Never,' he hissed, 'shall that virgin brow be defaced by a coronet; never shall that pure form be polluted by—by—,' he paused, staggered, looked wildly round him, brushed off the salt dews that passion had distilled upon his broad and beautiful forehead with the back of his hand, and, uttering a low moan, fell prone upon the carpet. 'I have killed him!' poor Madeline shrieked, rushing to his side and raising his head and gazing with wild and piteous eyes upon the white lips and the convulsed cheeks. At that moment the door opened, and Lord Algernon entered."

"What a queer story!" exclaimed my aunt, who was nevertheless growing interested.

"It is beautifully written in parts," said Conny.

"Are these your pencil-marks?" I asked, taking the volume from her lap.

"Yes."

"Here is 'beautiful!!!' with three points of exclamation. 'The silent stream that runs smoothly past us, checked in its course becomes a raging torrent.' Very true. Here is a passage doubly underscored: 'It is easy to love a woman, but difficult to find a woman worth loving.'"

"Oh, never mind those marks," exclaimed Conny.

"Is the hero often afflicted with salt dews?" I inquired.

"You are laughing at me." She snatched the book from my hand, and pouted.

"I don't often read novels," said I, "but when I do, I must say I like a good gory story—something dripping or dank—with a yellow-haired heroine who loves to sit on her lover's grave and braid her tresses by the light of the moon, and an Italian rival who stabs everybody in the forehead. If my hair doesn't rise twice at least in every ten pages, I consider the author a muff. Domestic stories I hate. There is no need to subscribe to a library to hear people ask each other if they prefer brown bread to white, and muffins to crumpets, and to watch a curate take a flute in pieces out of his pocket and blow 'Ye banks and braes' to the pen-sive, flat-chested lady who works him slippers, and puts four lumps of sugar into his tea. Give me, I say, wounds

and starting eye-balls, matted hair and clandestine meetings, streams of blood and gurgling yells. I don't object to noblemen, but I think that money-lenders make the best villains. I also require that the heroine be supple and light-some, and lissom and loose, with a tread like a panther, and a spring like—like——”

“A flea,” suggested my aunt.

“What a time you men always are over your wine,” said Conny. “What *do* you talk about?”

“I have received an invitation.”

“What! to Thistlewood?” asked my aunt.

“Yes, where I shall no doubt be shot.”

“Through the heart,” warbled Conny, with a sly laugh.

"Teazer, I am told, pulls a deadly trigger," said I, looking at Conny.

"When do you go?" inquired my aunt.

"On Monday."

"They seem in a great hurry to have you," with a toss of the head.

"The invitation was hearty and irresistible. Yet I am so perfectly happy at Grove End, that I have no wish to leave it even for a day."

"You must make haste to come back," said my aunt.

"If Teazer will let you," laughed Conny.

I whispered, "Would you care if Teazer didn't let me?"

She hung her head and smiled. Her mamma was looking at us; having, I believe, overheard my question.

"Do you mean yes or no, Conny?"

She honoured me with a look; a full, deep, inscrutable look. The blue of her eyes was as fathomless as the blue of the heavens—and as expressionless. However, my heart found the meaning it wanted in them; and if my aunt hadn't been watching, I should have grown demonstrative.

My uncles were a long time absent. "What *can* they be doing?" my aunt kept on exclaiming.

"Talking over business matters, no doubt," I replied.

Conny went to the piano and began to play; and when she was in the middle of one of those fantasias, which you can only submit to listen to when they are played by the girl you love, the two old gentlemen entered. My aunt challenged

them pretty briskly, and sarcastically expressed her surprise to see them.

"Really," said she, "I quite expected every moment to hear you ring for breakfast."

"Tut, tut!" cried my uncle Dick, who was in boisterous good spirits. "We have been settling the affairs of nations, and arranging the succession of dynasties."

And going up to Conny, he asked her if she knew "Tom Bowling."

"No."

"Then I'll sing it for you," and down he sat, and sang the song excellently. It was curious that this big stout man, whose voice when he talked was a bass, rose into a thin clear tenor the moment he began to sing. "Those are the songs I like," said he, nodding his thanks for our applause. "Give me 'The Ivy Green,'

and 'Pray Goody,' and 'I'm afloat,' before all your later trumpery of words and music, fit only for cats to wail their loves with. If the songs of a country are, as they ought to be, the expression of the national character, what will our grand-children think of the age that could produce and enjoy the namby-pamby you now-a-days hear in concerts and drawing-rooms? Go back to my young days, and look into the songs we used to sing. There is a manliness even in the most sentimental of Moore's ballads—a delicate reference to heroic actions and Irish spirit, which gives them a flavour you'll look for in vain in your modern verselets. We sang Burns then, and Campbell, and Byron, and Scott, and that was the age of Waterloo and Navarino. You should have heard Incledon

sing 'Tom Moody,' or Bannister sing 'Lovely Nan.' You'd have been content to put wadding in your ears for the remainder of your lives."

And so saying, he wheeled round upon the music-stool, and played a queer piece of dance music, which, he said, was called "Go to the Devil and shake yourself."

We passed the rest of the evening pleasantly, in hearing Conny sing, or listening to uncle Dick's stories, or arguing good-humouredly on a variety of topics until ten o'clock struck, when uncle Dick said he must go to bed; he had to be up early to catch the train for London, and wanted to fortify himself for a hot and fatiguing day. He shook my hand very warmly after bidding the others good-night, and said, "I shall expect you on Monday. I daresay Teazer will meet

you, if you let her know what train you arrive by. If not, our house isn't a mile from the station, and you won't be able to miss it after getting into the high road."

I now thought it about time that I should be making my way home: but uncle Tom, seeing me prepare to leave, came up to me, and said, "What's your hurry? I have something to say to you. The night is fine, and the longer you stay, the more brightly the moon will light you home."

He then turned to his wife, who was watching us, and said, "My dear, I have something of importance to talk over with Charlie, and we mean to shut ourselves up in the library. You need not sit up. Send us in the whiskey, and we'll strive our utmost

to console ourselves for your absence."

"What a quantity of talking you will have had before you go to bed!" exclaimed his wife. "Pray what is all this mighty mystery about?"

"Some of these days you shall hear," replied her husband, with a good-natured laugh. "Now then, Charlie, bid your aunt and Conny good-night, and follow me."

On entering the library, whither he had preceded me by some minutes, as I had chosen to linger a little whilst I wished Conny good-night, I found the lamp lighted, glasses upon the table, and my uncle seated in an arm-chair near the open window. High overhead rode the brilliant moon; the soft night-wind rustled the leaves of the trees; and the wide

grounds lay mottled with moonshine, and the shadows of bush and plant. I drew a chair to the window, lighted a cigar, and, as I felt the cool air breathing upon my face, exclaimed, "A Turk would call this paradise."

"And so might a Christian," answered my uncle. "We ought to be happy. We ought to be grateful. I hope, I believe, I am. Few men have better reason to be satisfied with life than myself. I enjoy good health; my wife is the best of women; my girl is dutiful and loving; my brothers are spared to delight me with their society whenever they choose to see me, and," he added, leaning forward and grasping my hand, "I have a nephew who is a thoroughly good fellow, and to whom I am as much attached as if he were my son."

I thanked him in warm and affectionate terms.

"And *now* what do you think of Dick?" he asked.

"I think him a very fine fellow, and a very fine gentleman, which I did *not* think him this mornig."

"Ay, truly, he's a gentleman in a much higher sense than mere behaviour and the power of talking well imply. He is charitable to a fault; so soft-hearted that he refused to be a magistrate because he said the position would cost him more than he was worth, as he never could agree to a conviction without endowing the families of the men he helped to send to goal. He and I have been having a long talk about you, and I am delighted to say that he thinks well of my scheme."

"I hope," said I, "that I didn't offend him by my somewhat cool reception of him at the bank this morning?"

"Not at all. He likes you, and believes he will like you better when he knows you better, which is the best assurance of future friendship a man can hold out. . . . I suppose you know that he is worth about forty thousand pounds?"

"I think my father mentioned something of the kind to me."

"That is a great deal of money for a man to possess whose tastes are inexpensive, and who has only one child. His daughter's name, as you know, is Theresa. She spent a few days with me some months ago, and I'll bet you a hat that when you see her you'll think her as handsome a girl as is anywhere to be met."

"What's her age?"

"One-and-twenty."

"Fair or dark?"

"Neither. But don't ask me to catalogue her charms, you shall judge for yourself. Now, my boy, I'll tell you what I want you to do. Dick is anxious to see Teazer married. He feels himself growing old, and has been rendered uneasy lately by some kind friend telling him that he looks an apoplectic subject. He told me to-night, that on the day of his daughter's marriage he will give her ten thousand pounds. My scheme—the scheme he thoroughly relishes—is for you to marry her, bring the money into the bank, and I'll make you a partner."

I pulled my cigar out of my mouth, and stared at him.

"Marry her!" I gasped.

"Certainly," replied my uncle. "Of course you will have to get her to love you; but that," he added with a laugh, "is what you call in France a *fait entendu*."

"But—but—I'm not sure—I think—in fact I would rather not marry her," I stammered.

"Nay, don't say that until you've seen her," said my uncle, with a deprecating wave of the hand.

"I don't want to see her."

"My dear boy, pray consider your position. Outside of my bank you have no prospects. You *must* admit that. I never meant you to be a clerk. The moment I received your father's letter, the idea of a marriage between you and Theresa occurred to me, and I was delighted with a notion that could not fail

to make both my brothers happy. Of course I could not unfold my scheme until I had consulted with Dick, and watched your progress. But Dick, I tell you, likes the proposal immensely, and you are now sufficiently acquainted with business to qualify you for a partnership. You have still much to learn, indeed; but you can pick the whole thing up by degrees."

"My dear uncle," I cried, interrupting him, "I appreciate your generosity, I am overcome, at least with one view of your liberal intentions—but it is too late."

"Too late! what do you mean?"

"I am already in love."

"Come, come! you are joking."

"I am already deeply in love."

"Deeply in love!"

"Yes—with your daughter."

"Eh!" he exclaimed, giving a little jump in his chair, "you don't mean—what?—in love with Conny?"

I nodded.

"No, no!" he cried, with great impetuosity; "that's impossible—that's out of the question. You can't marry her. You're not suited for each other. Consider, my *dear* boy, how could you support her?"

"I have considered nothing. All that I know is, I love her."

"And what does *she* say?"

"She asks for time."

"What!" he cried, lost in amazement, "have you proposed?"

"Yes," I gasped, "and she asked me to give her time."

"Does my wife know?"

"I believe she does."

“And she has never dropped me a hint. Upon my word, this is not the first time things have happened in my house, right under my nose, which all the world has seen but me. But it's out of the question. My plans are formed, and they don't include your marriage with Conny. No. *Your* wife must be Theresa. You are made for each other. When I die, who do I leave behind me to keep the bank going? This has been on my mind for years. But when I got your father's letter I instantly saw my way. *You* should marry Theresa, who would bring you a fortune to put into the concern, and Conny should wait until some eligible young man offered for her hand, and then I'd make *him* a partner. You two would carry on the business after my death. Conny is sure to marry sooner or later,

she is too pretty to remain single. As to the objections you could make against marrying a woman for her money, I can anticipate them all by simply showing you that your partnership will be a handsome equivalent for the fortune she brings."

"Too late! too late!" I muttered, looking at the moon.

"Why the deuce didn't my wife speak to me about this nonsense?" asked my uncle, who was evidently fretting over her secret share in the matter. "But all women are alike. No matter which way the current runs, you'll find them rowing against it. Why, surely she can't see her way in your marriage with Conny?"

"For God's sake don't poo-poo me," I cried. "You don't know how I love her."

"I don't want to know. I would much rather not hear. The thing's a mistake. I never expected it. It must end. You're a fine fellow, and I would as soon see you Conny's husband as another man. But there are obstacles not to be got over under a larger sum of money than you possess. Don't disappoint me. Don't object and argue. My scheme is perfect. I maintain it is a magnificent scheme. It assures your fortune; it assures the permanency of the bank; it increases our capital; it gratifies my brother, and will please your father."

I puffed furiously at my cigar, too much overcome to speak. I suppose he must have seen how completely upset I was, for dropping his somewhat energetic and expostulatory tone, he said in his kindest manner,

"Well, Charlie, we won't discuss the subject any further to-night. It is only reasonable, after all, that it should take you by surprise. I have a sound confidence in your good sense, and have no doubt whatever, that after you have turned the matter over once or twice in your mind, you will agree with me in thinking my plan a remarkably fine one."

"Never!" I muttered to myself.
"Never!"

"Or what is better," he continued, "instead of disturbing yourself with reflections, wait until you have met Theresa. If she doesn't bring you to her feet, may this glass be my poison!"

"You don't consider my feelings," I said, bitterly. "You forget that I am already in love."

"Well, well, wait till you have met Theresa."

"I'll wait," said I, grimly.

"You think my scheme a splendid one, don't you?"

"It is like selling your soul to the devil, to marry a woman only for her money!" I burst out.

"You'll marry her for love—mark my words."

"Love! how many hearts do you think I have? but no matter—I'll wait."

Here I got up, for I was really afraid of growing hysterical.

"Your father will jump for joy when he hears of this," said my uncle, squeezing my hand.

Now, whether I *was* hysterical, or whether my sense of the ridiculous was deeply stirred by the ludicrous image of

my tall and stately father jumping for joy, I burst into a loud laugh, in which my uncle joined; and half choking with a fit of merriment that was really made ghastly by its approximation to the most morbid and passionate thoughts, I rushed away from the house.

CHAPTER II.

“From better habitations spurn’d,
Reluctant dost thou rove?
Or grieve for friendship unreturn’d,
Or unregarded love?”

Goldsmith.

ON reaching my lodgings I went to bed ; but I might as well have sat up, for the dawn brightened into clear daylight before I closed my eyes. I lay thinking over my uncle’s scheme and abusing it, and wishing he had been born an idiot rather than that his mind should have stumbled upon an idea so peculiarly disagreeable.

What chiefly worried me was not his

wish that I should marry Theresa—for really that was a matter altogether in my power, and a circumstance over which nobody but myself could have any control—but the very decided manner in which he had expressed himself against my love for Conny. I had not expected it. I felt insulted. I considered that my pride had received a wound. I had made sure that he would have welcomed my love for his daughter with irrepressible delight. He was so amiable a man, with so mild a manner, that the warm way in which he had attempted to annihilate my hopes impressed and affected me as if he had flown in a passion.

But I needn't inflict all my thoughts upon you. It is enough to say that before falling asleep I had made up my mind to allow no earthly power to sunder

me from my adored, and marry me to a woman I already disliked before having seen.

My uncle was very friendly next day, but did not allude to the subject of our evening's conversation. He asked me to dine with him, and I consented; for I wanted to talk to my aunt, and get her advice and sympathy. I felt very much disposed to be cool and haughty with my uncle, to let all the fine gentleman that was pent up in my bosom fly out, and resent his ruthless intrusion on what a young lady once called in my hearing, "The innermost recesses of the most secret shrine within the holy of holies of the heart's core." But his amiability disarmed me. The antiseptic dew of his generous nature fell upon my temper, and kept it sweet in spite of my earnest belief

that the sleeping lion inside me ought to get up, stiffen his tail, and shake the forests.

My aunt and Conny were out when I got to Grove End, and did not return until twenty minutes before dinner-time, so that I could have no conversation until we had dined. At table, I was very calm and pensive, and felt so sentimental, that I think, had I been asked, I could have written an ode fit to appear in any private album. I watched Conny incessantly : too much so, I fear, for I believe I embarrassed her. I wish she had laughed : I wish she had sneered : I wish she had insulted me. I wanted steeling. But no ! she gave me thrilling looks, kept her countenance, and eat so languidly, that my heart leapt up, like Wordsworth's when he saw the blue sky ; I believed that her

father's scheme had been unfolded to her and that the fear of losing me had taught her to know she LOVED!

Neither my uncle nor aunt conversed with their wonted ease. A cloud overhung us. I noticed that, when Thomas spoke, his wife grew absent; that when he addressed her, she grew disdainful. Yes! there had been a quarrel; no, not a quarrel, but an argument.

"She's a woman," I thought, regarding her affectionately; "and all women are on the side of sentiment *versus* lucre; passion *versus* fine houses: emotion *versus* Gillow's furniture. She will be my friend: fight for me against her husband, and Dick, and Teazer: save me from being married in spite of my screams, and finally hand me victorious to her lovely, blushing Conny."

After dinner my uncle asked me to smoke a cigar with him in the library. I thanked him, and declined. I wanted to get to my aunt, and felt as if the smell of a cigar would make me ill.

"Why, what's the matter with you?" he exclaimed, looking at me earnestly. "Not smoke!"

"Sometimes I don't care about smoking," said I.

"So much the better. I have often thought that you smoke too much. Where are you going?"

"Into the grounds. I find this room uncommonly warm."

"By the way, I mentioned our conversation to my wife, and I am mortified to find her opposed to the scheme. The fact is, women never will take practical views. They don't seem able to under-

stand that money is necessary for life ; and many of them, I am persuaded, believe that their husbands have nothing to do, when a bill comes in, but to go out of doors and pick enough money out of the soil to pay it with. I can quite understand her liking you so well as to regret that it is out of our power to sanction your marriage with Conny ; but I *can't* understand her thinking such a match desirable, when she knows that—through no fault of yours—you couldn't support a wife."

"I'd rather talk in the open air," I answered. "This room is very oppressive."

"Very well. I'll follow you presently. I am very glad to see that you are beginning to take to my scheme kindly."

"I!" but I wouldn't argue.

"The simple fact is," he continued, "that my wife, like all mothers, is jealous of anybody receiving the attention which she thinks her daughter has a right to before all other young ladies. If it came to the point, you would find her as averse to your marriage with Conny as I am; but as it hasn't come to the point, she frets—the silly woman!—over the idea of Theresa getting the admiration which she claims for her girl."

"She needn't," said I. "However, you'll join me presently." And I went out.

Conny was on the lawn, but my aunt was in the drawing-room.

"Well, aunt," I exclaimed, bluntly, taking a seat beside her, "what do you think of your husband's scheme?"

"It is all fudge and nonsense," she answered. "He was angry with me last night after you left, for having concealed my suspicions from him that you were fond of Conny. But, as I told him, I choose to have my secrets as well as he."

"I am not going to marry Theresa," I said. "I am not going down to a man's house to make love to his daughter, and ask her to be my wife, as if I were a curiosity-dealer taking a journey in order to drive a bargain for a piece of china. My uncle knows that I am in love with Conny, and, although he pooh-poohs me, never will he get me to alter my sentiments, and forsake her for a woman who shoots pistols!"

"Thomas knows *my* sentiments about his scheme," said my aunt, with a toss

of her head. "I am only surprised that two brothers should put their noses together and discuss marriage as if it were a matter of buying and selling. Were Richard to ask my opinion—though he never would, for he has a most degraded notion of women's mind's—I shouldn't scruple to tell him that he was acting in a most unfatherly manner in making his fortune the chief attraction of his daughter, instead of insisting that she should be loved only for herself."

"My sentiments to a t!" I cried, grasping her hand, "and I honour you for having the courage to express them."

"But it is too true," she continued, "that men who have been mixed up all their lives in business matters become at last unable to take any but a mercenary view of life."

“Yes, and the worst is, that commercial views of things are always so disagreeable to one’s wishes. Mustn’t this be an abominable world where you are not allowed to put one leg before the other, unless you can pull out your purse, and show you have enough in it to pay for the privilege of walking !”

“Odious !”

“Talk of man !” I cried. “Why, man is the most miserable of all created things. Birds, and fish, and animals, come into the world already clothed ; all degrees of temperature are pretty much alike to them ; they are prepared for changes. Their breakfasts, dinners, and suppers lie scattered for them upon the face of the world, and all they have to do is to eat and drink. They may pair without anybody’s consent ; they’ve got no

relations to interfere, and no marriage settlements to make them hate each other. But man is born naked, with a skin so sensitive that heat and cold give him equal tortures. He has got to dig for his food, without being sure of finding any. He is kicked if he hasn't money, and is plundered if he has. If he falls in love with a woman, it is a hundred to one that he marries somebody else, for thousands of obstacles are piled up in his way. Worse than all, he's cursed with thought and memory; so that, however happy he tries to be in the present, there's always misery enough in the past to poison his existing bliss, and uncertainty enough in the future to make him dread to look forward."

Saying which I ground my teeth.

"It is all too true," replied my aunt,

dolefully; "and there can be no doubt that man is a wretch in more senses than one. But I wouldn't be cast down if I were you. You have a friend in me."

"Thanks—thanks; I know I have."

"And it really needn't follow that, because you *visit* your other cousin at Thistlewood, you need *marry* her."

"Certainly not. No human power—but I won't boast. Time shall prove. Your husband's scheme wouldn't give me a moment's uneasiness, if it were not for the decided objection he expressed to my loving Conny. For who could force me to marry Theresa if I declined?" And I folded my arms and fixed a steady gaze on my aunt's cap.

"Oh, as to my husband, leave him to me," said my aunt, with a profound nod. "It is true that he can sometimes have

his secrets ; but," she added, proudly, "I can always have my way."

"He objects because I am poor."

"Yes, he told me his reasons this morning, and I gave him mine for wishing to see you my daughter's husband. I warned him against Mr. Curling. I said, 'I have eyes in my head, and can see that Charlie will make her happy. But if you drive your nephew into loving another woman, as sure as you are a man, Conny will grow sentimental again over your cashier. How are you to help it?' I asked him. 'You bring no young men to the house : she sees no society ; if she isn't actually in love with Charlie, she told me enough to persuade me that it will not be long before she loves him.' But he pish'd and pshaw'd, and pooh-pooh'd me down, and told me I was

interfering, and that I was foolish to imagine for a moment that there had been anything serious between Conny and Mr. Curling. You'd be surprised to know how very stubborn Thomas can be when he likes."

"What," I asked, "is there to prevent him from making me a partner? He means that I should join him if I marry Theresa; what's to prevent me joining him should I marry Conny? Perhaps if you were to suggest this to him, it might give him an idea."

"I'll not touch upon the bank nor discuss the matter in a mercenary way at all. Thomas knows very well what he can afford; and I should certainly think it very hard if, after working all these years, and obliging me to be polite to objectionable people merely for their

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custom, he hasn't money enough to enable his daughter to marry the man of *my* choice. I am quite content to threaten him with Mr. Curling. He has a very good opinion of my judgment, and I often hear him repeating my remarks for his own, forgetting where he got them."

Here unfortunately we were interrupted by his entering the room, followed by Conny. Had it not been for her daughter's presence, I believe that my aunt would have attacked her husband pretty freely, for she had worked herself up into a great state of excitement, and stood in no need of further provocation to speak her mind. He perfectly well knew what we had been talking about, and deprecated his wife's stern gaze with a bland smile; then expressed his surprise to find

me indoors after my recent complaint of the heat.

I liked him so well, was under so many obligations to him, and was so sensible that, though his scheme was entirely obnoxious to me, he had nevertheless contrived it in the generous hope of forwarding my interests, that it was quite impossible for me to be reserved or cool to him. I told him that I should be glad to smoke a cigar out of doors, a proposal he eagerly welcomed, being, as I could see, extremely anxious to avoid any discussion with his wife in my presence. I thought, when we were alone, that he would ask me what my aunt and I had been talking about, and made up my mind to answer him freely. Instead, he resolutely avoided the subject. Conny joined us: and, after a

quarter of an hour's conversation, he returned to the house, leaving me alone with my cousin.

"I wonder your papa allows us to be alone," said I. "He ought to keep between us, since he so strongly objects to my loving you."

"How dreadfully plain-spoken you are, Charlie. You oughtn't to talk to me in this manner."

"*You* know I love you," I answered, "and your father knows it, and everybody knows it. What's the use of concealment, then?"

"I suppose," said she, with delicious coyness, "papa thinks there would be no use in his interfering between us for once only, since you are here every day, and can be with me when he is away."

"Do you know," I asked, looking at her askew, "that your papa and I had a—a conversation last night after we left you?"

"Indeed!"

"Haven't you heard?"

"Mamma said something about it this morning."

"I told him that after I had won your love, I should want to marry you: and he said, it was out of the question."

"Why will you talk about loving and marrying me?" she asked, a little peevishly; and then instantly changing her tone, and letting me look down deep into her eyes, she said, "How do you know I will ever marry you?"

"I'll *make* you love me."

"Don't speak so fiercely. You quite frighten me."

"Oh, Conny, for God's sake don't jest with my feelings," I groaned.

"You want people to love you at first sight."

"PEOPLE!!"

"You promised that you wouldn't speak to me about—about your feelings again until I gave you leave."

"And I'd have kept my word, if your father hadn't told me he would not sanction our marriage."

"I should hope he wouldn't sanction it yet."

"How can you talk like that? But I didn't ask him to sanction it. In fact, I don't remember speaking about our marriage. He wanted me to make love to Theresa, and I told him that was impossible, because I was in love with you. And I shall always consider—fond

as I am of him—that he spoke to me rather heartlessly.”

“Why do you object to do what he wants?” she inquired, with a slight raising of the eyebrows, which was peculiar to her, and which made a complete conundrum of the expression that her face might happen to wear.

“Why do you ask? You know.”

“Have you heard that she is very pretty?”

“There is only one pretty woman in the world, and her name is Conny.”

She could not help looking pleased; a bright colour came into her face, and she was silent. When I peeped at her again, the colour had faded, and she was as pensive and down-looking as any nun.

“Conny,” I whispered, in my softest

voice, "if you will only tell me you love me, and will consent to marry me, your father must give way. The decision that is to make me supremely happy or supremely miserable rests with you, not with him."

"Charlie," she answered, in a voice a very great deal softer than mine, "you must give me time. Some of these days I may be able to answer you decisively; but you must never talk of *making* me love you, for if I don't turn to you naturally, I shall never turn to you at all. Besides, you ought to see Theresa. You might like her better than me——"

"Oh! oh!"

"You might find her a far more suitable wife than ever I could make you, and might think her infinitely prettier."

"I *might* become a king. I *might*

take the moon out of the sky, and put it in my pocket. And I mightn't."

"At all events I am determined not to hear another word from you until you have seen her. You must be tried a little before I make up my mind. The old saying is, 'no man can be considered honest until he has been tempted.'"

"If that is your opinion of me," said I, "it is quite right that I should go to Thistlewood. I want to be tested. I only hope that I may find Theresa perfectly beautiful, and thoroughly womanly, and brilliantly clever, and superfine in every point, to prove that, compared to you, she will be no more to me than that bush."

"Very well; and now, not another word until you come back. Give me your word."

"All right," I groaned. "But I wish you'd let me take away some little remembrance, some dear promise, some sweet word of hope, to comfort me in my absence."

She laughed, blushed, turned pale, looked at me, shook her head, and exclaimed,

"No—it is too late; you have pledged your word, and you mustn't ask me for a sign of any kind until you return from Thistlewood."

And the evasive little creature, with her hair shining like spangles in the rays of the setting sun, danced a minuet across the lawn, and vanished within the house.

CHAPTER III.

Isaac. "Good lack, with what eyes a father sees!
As I have life she is the very reverse of all this."

The Duenna.

MONDAY morning came; a still and hazy morning, portentous of noontide heat. I had not written to uncle Richard to tell him the train I meant to leave by, for two reasons: I didn't want to give him or his daughter the trouble of meeting me, and as there were several trains during the day, I could not say at what hour I might take it into my head to start.

However, as it was not possible for me

to see Conny, and as the time promised to hang tediously upon my hands, I sent the landlady for a fly, packed a carpet-bag, and started to catch a train that left at half-past twelve.

On my way to the station, I stopped at the bank to bid my uncle a final farewell, but found him out.

"I hope you'll enjoy yourself," said Mr. Curling, with a grave face.

"I hope I may."

"Will you be long absent?"

"I don't know. Perhaps a week; perhaps a fortnight. Good-bye." And out I went.

Great heaven! as I recall the nod I gave him, I am amazed to think how full of the unexpected the future is. You shake a man by the hand and leave him, and by the time you meet

him again, everything the least likely to occur has happened. Though you held him the most honest of living beings, he is committed for forgery; or though you thought him doomed to be a struggling man all his life, he has made a fortune on the Stock Exchange, and is surrounded by architects with plans for a mansion; or though you considered him a very ordinary-minded person, he has just acknowledged himself the author of a book the world has gone into ecstasies over. So shifting is this life, it is scarcely possible to turn your back upon the most familiar object, without finding it changed on looking at it again. It is a pantomime, but not a droll one. Harlequin Time does indeed frisk it merrily; but there is too much of the scythe about his rod, too much tragedy about the

metamorphoses he works, to make us think him diverting.

It was a little after half-past twelve when I got into the train, and it was very nearly half-past two when I got out. Thistlewood Station was a little platform, backed by a diminutive shed, with a great hill running up behind it. I asked a porter the way to Mr. Hargrave's house, and he directed me to a high road.

This high road was terribly dusty and dazzling to the eyes. There was not an inch of shade to right or left of it to protect me from the overpowering rays of the sun. Worst of all, for half a mile at least, it was a steep hill. I felt my face gradually turning to the colour of a boiled lobster as I toiled along, and deplored my want of foresight in not

providing against this sweltering exertion, by asking my uncle to send his carriage to meet me.

On either side was a boundless extent of corn-fields, with never a sigh of air to disturb their yellowing heads. On reaching the summit of the hill, however, I was cheered by a very extensive view, not indeed comparable in beauty to that which was to be obtained from any of the hills about Updown, but exceedingly pretty, nevertheless. Far away down on the level plains were little white villages, shining amid groups of trees. A long line of railroad ruled the landscape, along which rolled a white cloud, that no doubt represented the train I had just quitted. The slate-coloured hills of the far-off horizon stood sharp and well-defined against the pale blue sky.

I trudged forward, gasping for air, and stopping frequently to press a handkerchief to my forehead, until I espied, at the extreme end of the road, a long wall bounding a perfect forest of trees. In a few minutes I had gained a gate surmounted by stone effigies. Close at hand was a lodge. I pulled the bell, and on a man presenting himself, inquired if this were Mr. Hargrave's house? It was. The gate was opened, and I passed out of the broiling road into a deliciously cool avenue, with deep glades and sunny openings among the trees, under which I observed some young deer browsing. The whole place was alive with the pipings of birds. Such a babel of airy voices I never before heard.

I was stepping pretty briskly along the avenue, wondering what sort of recep-

tion I should get, and whether my uncle was as cheery and hearty a man in his own house as he was out of it, when I suddenly heard the word "Halt!" uttered in a loud, clear, imperious female voice.

I looked about me, being uncertain from which side of the avenue the voice had proceeded, and seeing nobody, was in the act of advancing again, when bang! went the report of a pistol, so close and so loud, that, for the moment, I actually believed myself shot, and pulled off my hat, feeling pretty sure that I should find a bullet hole in it.

"Good God!" I thought. "What is the meaning of this?"

A thin cloud of blue smoke curled up from a tree on the right, and, as I gazed with a stupefied air in that direction, the tall commanding figure of a

woman stepped forward, and approached me.

“Why didn’t you halt when I ordered you?” she demanded, fixing a pair of dark, glittering eyes on me.

I looked at her with amazement. She was dressed in a tight-fitting body, with a long skirt, which she held up in one hand, whilst she grasped a small revolver in the other. On her head was a large garden hat which threw so dark a shadow over her face that I could master no more of its details than the keen bright eyes. Could this be my cousin Theresa?

I was so much astonished by the report of the pistol, and her peremptory address, that I quite forgot my manners. I had hastily put my hat on, and there I kept it. “You may bless your stars,” she exclaimed, “that I didn’t take the curl

out of your mustache with a pistol ball. I could do it. Do you doubt me? Turn your face round, so that I get your profile."

And she levelled her pistol full at my head.

"Who are you?" I stammered; "and what do you mean to do? Put that pistol down. Don't you know that you can't play with a more dangerous toy?"

"Turn your face round as I order you, sir," was her answer.

"I shall do no such thing," I said, picking up my carpet bag, which I had dropped, but furtively watching her movements with indescribable anxiety.

"Oh," she exclaimed, to my inexpressible relief, turning the muzzle of the pistol aside, "if you are *afraid*, that is another matter. However, for the future,

when I order you to stop, I should advise you to do so."

And so saying, she wheeled round, and disappeared among the trees.

I hastened forward, not doubting for a moment that, whether she was my cousin or not, she was not in possession of her reason, and congratulating myself on what I could not but consider a very narrow escape of my life. In a few moments I reached the house, a fine old building with a great door and many windows, the upper ones hooded, and a broad carpet of grass all round it, on to which the queerest little doors opened, with large bow-windows on the ground-floor.

The door was opened by a corpulent man in a claret-coloured livery, and a groggy eye, who, on my asking if Mr.

Hargrave was within, cocked his head, and reflected a little before he answered,

"He is, sir."

"Well, show me in, and tell Mr. Hargrave I am here."

"I will, sir," answered the man, whose accent intimated his nationality pretty powerfully.

I thought him a bit of a fool, or perhaps new to his place, and entered the hall, remarking, however, that he shrank away from me as I passed him. Burnt up by the sun, and blinded by the glare in the road, and wearied by my walk, and half-choked with dust, and, above all, utterly disgusted with the extraordinary behaviour of the young lady of the avenue, I flung my hat and bag pettishly on the hall table and marched into a long, handsome drawing-room, the fat man-servant mean-

while watching me intently as I entered, and hurriedly banging the door to when I was within.

I threw myself into an arm-chair, thankful for the privilege of resting myself, and glanced languidly around the spacious room. In any other mood I should have found a great deal to admire; but I was so vexed and amazed by my reception in the avenue, and so irritated by the imbecile behaviour of the footman, that I could think of nothing else.

However, I had scarcely been seated a minute when my uncle came in.

"How are you? how are you?" he cried, grasping my hand. "Delighted to see you and to welcome you. Why didn't you let us know the train you came by? We would have saved you a scorching walk."

"I wish I had," I answered; "that hill near the station has nearly been the death of me."

"Ay, that road in summer is awful. But a glass of seltzer and brandy will soon set you right," and he rang the bell. "How did you leave them at Grove End?" he inquired.

"They are all very well."

"They're a happy family, aren't they? It always does me good to spend a day or two with Tom. He has the very best nature in the world."

Here my fat friend entered. How the fool stared at me! I thought there must be something extraordinary in my appearance, and under that impression, got up, after he had left the room, and looked at myself in the glass.

"Oh, don't mind being a little sun-

burnt," called out my uncle, who mistook my object. "I like men well tanned."

"Indeed," said I, "I was looking to see what there could be in my face to cause your man to stare at me."

"Did he? Pray don't mind him. He's an Irishman and a faithful fellow, though not a smart waiter. I keep him for his wit, which is sometimes first-rate. He came to me with a high character out of Lord Lavender's family. Every Hibernian must be forgiven something. You know what Burke said: 'All Irishmen carry a bit of potato in their heads.'"

Just then the man returned. He fixed his little black eyes on me as he handed me the foaming draught, and for the life of me I couldn't help bursting into a

laugh when, on quitting the room, he stared at me intently, whilst he slowly closed the door.

"That has refreshed you, hasn't it?" said my uncle.

"Yes, thank you. By the way, I must ask you not to be surprised or shocked if you catch me drinking more brandy than may seem good for me whilst I am with you. I don't possess my father's iron nerves, and have a foreboding that I shall stand in need of strong stimulants to sustain me."

"What now, Charlie?"

"Did you hear a shot fired about ten minutes ago?"

"A what?"

"A shot."

"No."

"My life has been attempted," said I.

"Where? When? By whom?" cried my uncle, staring at me.

"In your avenue, and by a tall lady in a tight-fitting dress, whom I have strong reasons for suspecting to be your daughter."

His face relaxed, and he burst out into one of his stunning roars of laughter.

"Tell me what the minx did?" he shouted.

I told him. Again the room resounded to his roar. As there was really nothing in the incident to occasion so much violent hilarity, I assumed that his sense of the ridiculous was aggravated by the pertinacious gravity of my face.

"Excuse me! excuse me!" he cried. "It was wrong—it was rude—but oh! what an idea! what an idea! Did you think you were shot?"

"Really, I had no time to think. I was too much surprised by the lady's very novel reception of her father's guest, to reflect upon my danger."

"Nay, don't be annoyed by the child's nonsense," he exclaimed, recovering his composure. "She is very much to blame for alarming you, and I shall rate her soundly for her conduct."

"Oh, pray say no more about it, uncle. I confess she surprised me, but I should be very sorry for her to think that I am offended. One thing I must hasten to do when we meet: I must vindicate my character from the charge of cowardice. She looked so very fierce, and levelled her loaded pistol in so very threatening a manner, that the stoutest hero might well have been allowed to feel a little timid."

"I wish," answered my uncle, looking now thoroughly annoyed, "that she would give up this foolish practice of firing pistols. I like to think my girl plucky; but every day I expect to hear of some accident. Ever since her mother's death, she has had her own way in everything—though, for all that, I don't think her nature has been spoilt by my indulgence." He said this with a shake of the head, that plainly said, "I am sure it hasn't."

"You have a charming house," said I, anxious to change the subject, now that I saw he was annoyed.

"Not such a snuggery as Tom's," he answered, and took me to a window at the back of the drawing-room, which commanded a fair view of the grounds, and told me of some titled poet, I forget what lord, who had resided here in seven-

teen hundred and something four, and of the several famous people, such as Wilkes and Foote, and Selwyn, whom his lordship had entertained. These memories appeared to constitute its great charm in his eyes, and it was with no small pride that he told me there was a room upstairs, in which Soame Jenyns had written his "Art of Dancing." (I quote from memory, and won't be sure that I give the right names.) Had he only guessed how tired I was, he would have reserved his gossip.

He presently asked me if I would like to go to my bed-room, and on my answering yes, laid hold of my carpet bag—which by the way he laughed at, desiring me to tell him what time I meant to spend at his house—and conducted me to a room furnished so luxuriously, and

commanding so fine a view, that I couldn't have been more impressed, had I been shown into a state bed-chamber at Windsor Castle.

"There," said he, looking round him with a glowing face, "in this room, my boy, I have been told, on the very best authority, Smollett corrected the last pages of his 'Adventures of an Atom.' What do you say to *that*?"

"I have read 'Roderick Random,'" I answered, "and think it in parts as funny as 'Pickwick.'"

"No, no!" he exclaimed, seating himself near the open window, whilst I, seeing it was not his intention to leave, pulled off my coat, and fell to cooling my face in a basin of water, "nothing equal to Pickwick was ever written. Dickens is a truer humourist than Smollett,

and what's more," he added, warmly, "there are portions of his writings of which the irony is as good as anything to be found in Swift. Tell me in what particular Dickens isn't a match for any writer that's gone before him? His knowledge of human nature is as great as Fielding's; his pathos is deeper and truer than Sterne's; he is as tender as Goldsmith, and far funnier than Smollett, who is always farcical when he is comical. I love this great man, and reverence him for the noble use he has made of his noble genius. May the day never break," he exclaimed, with a solemnity that astonished me, "when Dickens shall cease to be admired; for then surely will all the fine qualities that make up the English character, the love of country, sympathy with the suffering, affection for

the past, hatred of cant, and devotion to all that is manly and honest and true, have perished from among us. Whilst these qualities last Dickens will last; his fame rests upon them."

So saying, he pulled out a cigar-case, asked me if I would smoke, and on my declining, began to puff away like a steam-engine.

"We may do what we like here," said he, with a grin.

"Nothing to beat liberty," I replied.

"And yet," said he, expelling a great cloud of smoke with a sigh, "our happiest days are most often the days of restraint. When my poor wife was alive my liberties were jealously curtailed; and now I would give up every liberty I possess to clasp her dear hand again, to look into her dear eyes."

“Does Theresa resemble you or her mother?”

“There is a mingling of us both in her. But the mother preponderates. She has profound passions, the deepest nature a woman ever had. Such tenderness! such generous impulses! She has not her equal.”

Good gracious! I thought. How affection blinds us! Tender, indeed—*con-*found her! she nearly killed me! And here I thought of Conny, and inwardly groaned, “Always thine, my own! faithful unto the end!”

“Shall we go down-stairs?” asked my uncle.

“I am ready,” I replied; and we left the room. But we didn’t go down-stairs at once. My uncle was very proud of his house, and was evidently determined

to lose no time in showing me over it. My amiability was proof against my weariness; but I really shuddered at the prospect of being shown into, perhaps, twenty rooms, and detained on each threshold in order to hear the literary and social history that made up the interest of the floors and walls.

However, our progress was not so tedious as I had feared. On entering one room, indeed, my misgivings returned: for, in this room somebody of importance had, in a fit of intoxication, played a practical joke of a very awful nature, the effect of which was to render a negro imbecile for life; but, after this narrative, we got on pretty briskly.

A very few words will describe the house. It was full of long passages and rooms, into which I was constantly

stumbling, owing to the majority of them being sunk a foot or so beneath the level of the corridors. Some of them were empty: those that were furnished were furnished handsomely. One side of the roof was flat, and my uncle led me through a trap-door, whence we emerged into so broiling a sun, and on to a floor so burning, that I darted hastily down the staircase, protesting that if I wasn't killed by a sunstroke, I should be roasted alive. He told me that, in the cool of the evening, it was a great treat to sit upon this roof, "for from it," said he, "you may obtain as fine a prospect as any to be found in England."

I was beginning to grow somewhat curious to meet my cousin, and to examine with calmness and courage a young lady who thought nothing of enforcing

her commands with a revolver; but my uncle had not yet done with his house. I was to see the library before I was to be allowed to take mine ease. I hardly cared enough about books in those days to feel an interest in his collection. He was a complete Oldbuck in his devotion to old volumes, broadsides, tracts, and scarce editions. Many of his books, he assured me, as he stood with his back to the door, complacently surveying the large collection that was ranged, row upon row, round the walls, were worth their weight in gold.

“Here,” said he, pulling out a folio, “is a book for which I gave eight guineas, and for which I should consider myself insulted by an offer of twenty. Look at those engravings. You might search a thousand libraries, and not find this gem.”

The name of the book I forget: but I wouldn't own that the engraving he opened the book at, and pointed to with immense triumph, struck me as very rude, and not to be compared with illustrations to be found in modern books, costing only a few shillings. Bibliomania must be humoured, like any other form of madness. I was bitten with it myself not many years ago, and thought more of old bundles of illegible print stitched in parchment, well perforated with moths and worms, than of emeralds and diamonds. He pulled down several other volumes to show me, explaining their value and chattering about their contents in a style which convinced me that he was one of the very few book-buyers who are book-readers. I grew at last so thoroughly tired of having to stand and feign

attention and interest, that I proposed that we should return to the drawing-room, where I might hope to meet my cousin.

CHAPTER IV.

"Although her father is excessively rich, I should, were I a youth of quality, hesitate between a girl so neglected and a negro."

Dr. Johnson.

THERE was nobody in the drawing-room.

"Why doesn't Teazer come to us?" exclaimed my uncle. "Stay you here, my boy, and I'll go and call her."

I took a chair at the table, and began to inspect the contents of an album filled with photographs. Here was something to interest me, for on the very first page was a portrait of my father, taken ten years before, by little Chatelain, of the

Rue d'Epingle. Next him was my uncle, and below, Dick, facing Tom's wife. All these were capital photographs, and made me laugh. On the next pages were, on the left a photograph of Theresa, and on the right a portrait of Conny. I had now my two cousins before me, and could compare them. Conny looked indescribably pretty, in spite of a somewhat affected *pose*. Teazer's face was in profile, and a handsome profile it was. There was plenty of intellect in the low, square brow, over which the plentiful dark hair was roughly drawn. The eyelashes were long, but contributed little of tenderness to the determined gaze of the large eye. The contour of the bust was noble. She held a stout riding-whip across her shoulder, as a man holds a gun. Yet there was something very striking about this photo-

graph. I caught myself examining it intently and not without admiration ; though when my eye reverted to the sunny-haired beauty on the other page, my heart welcomed the sweeter attraction that drew it away from the fascination of the stern and handsome Teazer.

All at once the door was violently pushed open, and in walked the lady of the pistol ! I closed the album and stood up. She gave me a manly nod, though such a figure as hers ought to have been capable of the most graceful and sweeping bow in the world, and said, "Are you my cousin ?"

"I believe so," I answered, "that is, if you are Theresa Hargrave."

To this she made no reply, but stood for some moments, with a curling lip, examining me from head to foot in a

manner the most depressing to my self-conceit that can well be imagined.

Meanwhile, I honoured her with a similar inspection. Her portrait scarcely did her justice—it made her a brunette; whereas, her skin was delicately fair, though her eyes were dark and piercing, and her hair brown. She had a full red underlip, a fine tinge of red upon her cheeks, a straight Greek nose, and finely arched eyebrows. She held herself perfectly erect. I unhesitatingly admitted, in spite of the prejudice her extraordinary behaviour excited in me, that she was a strikingly handsome girl; but I sought in her face in vain for some sign of the capacity of tender impulse and the womanly characteristics her father had claimed for her.

“What made you afraid of me just

now?" she enquired without a smile. "You must be a very nervous person."

"I am much obliged to you for your good opinion," I replied loftily. And then conceiving that her singular manner was assumed, perhaps, for the purpose of raising a laugh at me, I said, "A very brave man might be allowed to feel a little timid on seeing a loaded pistol levelled at his head. But perhaps you mistook surprise for fear. You see, I was quite unprepared for your very noisy reception. I had heard much of your skill as a marksman, but I had no idea you were possessed of such immense courage as to shoot at a guest from behind a tree."

"A bumpkin!" she muttered, turning on her heel and throwing herself in a

decidedly inelegant posture on the sofa.

"You may sit down if you like."

I accepted her polite invitation, but with so perplexed a face that I could almost believe the expression on it merited the contemptuous gaze she fastened on me.

"Where's the governor?" she asked.

"I beg your pardon?"

"My father," she exclaimed petulantly.

"Did you never hear a father called governor before?"

"Oh yes, very often. I believe your governor has gone in search of you."

"Well, you don't need to whistle for a dog when he's at your feet, do you?"

"No, that would be a waste of time."

"Were you ever in these parts before?"

"These parts?" said I, not quite sure that I had heard her rightly.

"If my father had told me you were deaf, I'd have ordered a speaking-trumpet ready for your visit."

"I am not deaf. On the contrary, I am afflicted with a most torturing sensibility of hearing. In answer to your question, let me say that I never was in these parts before."

"What do you do? Are you clever? Can you draw, and spell, and read?"

I was sure now that she was laughing at me, but I thought her taste execrable.

"I cannot be certain about my spelling," I replied, "but I believe I can read."

"How old are you?"

"Four-and-twenty."

"Why, you're a mere boy!" she exclaimed with a loud laugh. "No wonder you're afraid of noises!"

I began to wish that my uncle would

come in. I was really alarmed by the girl's extravagance. There was something indescribably impudent in her manner, and a slanginess in her speech, to say nothing of its grammatical deficiencies, that was inexpressibly repulsive to me. Uncle Tom had suggested that she wanted taming, but that word suggested nothing. She stood in need of greater discipline than taming.

"Haven't you brought any messages for me from Grove End?" she demanded. "I don't want to be thought rude; but really, you seem a perfect stick, without a word to say for yourself."

"Your pistol has blown all my confidence out of me."

"You think me rather outspoken, don't you?"

"Rather."

"Don't you like outspoken people?
I do."

"Pray give me a little time. We scarcely know each other yet. By-and-by I may turn out as outspoken as you like."

"Oh! My father told me you have come here with the intention of being agreeable. I hope you won't be. I shall expect to be treated as a woman, not as an overgrown child, who is only happy when she is sucking sugar-candy. I have got some intellect, my father says, and I'll trouble you to respect me."

This extraordinary speech she delivered with a most consummately grave face. Had I detected but the faintest twinkle in her eye, I should have made up my mind to treat the reception she was giving me as a joke, and enter into the spirit

of her badinage, offensive as the taste was that could dictate it. But her gravity was not to be mistaken. Like the country girl of the play, she appeared to have neither tact nor breeding enough to restrain or moderate the violent and sudden exhibition of her character; and I sat listening to and watching her with much such mingled emotions of astonishment and disgust, as would no doubt possess me, were I compelled to make love to a female chimpanzee.

I was spared the trouble of hunting after some suitable answer to her singular remarks by the entrance of her father. He came in, saying that he had been giving orders to the servants to hurry forward with the dinner, which was faithfully promised by five o'clock; and then going up to his daughter, he exclaimed:

“Teazer, what on earth made you play Charlie so vile a trick? He tells me you fired a pistol at him! He will have to possess an uncommon share of good sense, not to suspect that he has been invited to a menagerie, if you don’t behave yourself.”

“Pray say no more about it,” I exclaimed.

Theresa fixed her shining eyes upon me, and I suspected, from the expression on her face, that she was going to “let out” at me in violent and powerful language. Instead of which she looked at her father, with a smile, and answered gently,

“I thought all visits of state and ceremony were celebrated by discharges of artillery.”

“Come, come, you were very wrong,”

said her father, turning his head aside to conceal a grin. "I can only promise you Charlie's forgiveness on one condition—that you will never be guilty of such folly again."

Once more I encountered her eyes fixed upon me, haughtily and angrily; and, anxious to conciliate her, I entreated my uncle to change the subject, assuring him that so far from being offended, I was only too pleased that Theresa should treat me *sans ceremonie*.

This handsome speech produced no impression on her whatever. She continued staring at me for some moments, in a way that appeared to me almost indelicate; then sneered, tossed her head, and asked me "to hand her that book near my elbow on the table." I obeyed her, and noticed that her father watched her

with curiosity and surprise. She kept the book open in her lap, I believe, as an excuse not to talk ; for, several times, whilst her father and I conversed, I caught her watching me, though she always took care to avert her eyes and curl her lip when I glanced at her. I thought her a perfect Tartar, and wondered at my uncle Tom's extraordinary want of penetration, in supposing that I could ever be brought to couple myself with such a woman.

She never opened her lips until the Irish man-servant, whose name I afterwards learnt was O'Twist, announced dinner. I thought it odd that my cousin made no change in her dress for the table, but supposed that her love of ease and freedom had long ago triumphed over all fiddling restraints of etiquette.

I rose and offered her my arm ; but as I approached, she swept her dress away from me, and exclaimed in a low tone, "When I want a crutch, I'll buy one. I have still the use of both my legs, thank God !"

I will leave you to imagine my feelings. "She may have a handsome person," thought I, "but I'll be hanged if she hasn't the soul of a kangaroo !"

My uncle, who was near the door when she made her overwhelming remark, and therefore could not have heard it, led the way to the dining-room. I caught him looking behind as if rather surprised that I hadn't his daughter on my arm ; but this, after a moment's reflection, I concluded to be a mere fancy.

She took a seat opposite me, and whilst her father said grace, smiled over her

shoulder at O'Twist, whose eyes were on me. I had very little doubt that she was not in her right senses, and marvelled at the blindness of her father in attributing virtues to her which seemed so entirely absent from her nature, that I could not conceive how he had imagined their existence. He made as good a host as Tom; but though the dinner was first-rate, the wines superior to any my uncle Tom had, I never in all my life felt so miserable nor enjoyed my food less. That confounded O'Twist, who stood behind his master's chair, scarcely ever removed his eyes from my face. I tried once to stare him out, but the longer I looked the more intent became his gaze. The discomfort his groggy eyes caused me I cannot describe. What, I kept thinking, *what* is there about me to provoke such

insolence? Am I in a madhouse? Have I mistaken my way, and found a welcome in an asylum for lunatics?

My uncle talked incessantly. The more agitated and dispirited I became, the more he plied me with his recollections, with stories of his doings in his young days, of actors and authors, of noble lords and needy parasites. Whether it was that he was spoiled in my esteem by the outrageous behaviour of his daughter and servant, or that I regarded him as heading a conspiracy against my peace of mind, I did not find half so much to like in him as I had at Grove End. He, it is true, could not see O'Twist's behaviour, as the rude creature stood behind his chair; and queer as his daughter's manners were, I could not reasonably expect him to chide her before me. But these con-

siderations gave me no encouragement. Now and then he would stay his monologue to ask Theresa for a date or a name, and she answered him readily enough; but to *my* questions and remarks she seldom vouchsafed a longer answer than yes or no.

Shortly after the dessert was placed upon the table she left the room, and to my great relief was followed by O'Twist. Vexed as I was, my politeness would not suffer me to make any comments on her behaviour. Had her father questioned me I should have been candid enough; but throughout our after-dinner chat he never mentioned her name, but confined his remarks entirely to books and pictures, or told stories, over which I should have roared as heartily as he, perhaps, had I been in a better temper.

When we had smoked our cigars out, he invited me to see his grounds. I consented, having made up my mind to convert myself into a perfectly passive agent for him and his daughter to do what they chose with, whilst I remained at Thistlewood, which, I registered a secret vow, should not be for long. He peeped into the drawing-room on passing across the hall, and, seeing his daughter, entered and called to me, "Teazer shall sing us a song before we go out. You'll get none of your die-away ballads here, Charlie. My girl has my taste, and stubbornly refuses to learn any song tainted with the least suggestion of molly-coddleism; eh, Teazer? Come, my dear, what shall it be?"

She walked to the piano at once, with the air of a person who has a very dis-

agreeable task to perform, but who knows that the sooner it is begun the sooner it will be over. The first thing she did was to knock the stool down. I instantly darted forward to pick it up, but she whispered angrily, "I am accustomed to help myself, thanks!" and set it upright with a smart bang. I paid her the compliment of considering that she was purposely clumsy in her movements, for she seemed to forget her ungainly part when seating herself, which she did with perfect but unconscious grace. I earnestly hoped she did not propose to play from music, for I dreaded the prospect of having to stand by her and turn over the pages, being ignorant of my notes, and only knowing when to turn by following the performer's eye.

She struck the piano, and I breathed

freely. But anything more distressing and feeble than her performance I never listened to. Why, Conny was a Patti and a Thalberg rolled into one compared to her! The song she sung was "Cease, rude Boreas," of all the songs ever written, the one, to my mind, the least suitable for a woman's voice. She was for ever striking the wrong notes, pausing often to cough or think, and singing with such ludicrous affectation, that it cost me an immense effort to preserve my gravity. Her father lost patience at the end of the first stanza, and exclaimed, "What's the use of asking Boreas to cease, when all the while you're raising a worse squall than ever he was known to blow? I never heard you sing like this before."

"I hate singing," she answered, rising

from the music-stool, which she overturned again. This time I didn't offer to pick it up. Neither did she; and thus I was placed in an abominably awkward position, for her father, of course, wondered at my want of manners.

"How awkward you are!" he exclaimed, peevishly, making a tremendous but futile effort to reach the stool himself.

She laughed, and coolly put the stool on end with her foot.

"I'll finish the song if my cousin likes," said she.

"No, thank you. He's had enough of it, I'll warrant. Come along into the garden, my boy, and let us breathe some fresh air."

As we went out, he said: "How wretchedly my daughter sang! Would

you believe that she has a fine contralto voice, and can play the piano brilliantly?"

I was amazed by his perverse partiality, which persisted in attributing all kinds of graces and perfections to a girl who seemed to me to be wanting in everything but a good figure and a handsome face.

"Perhaps she was nervous," said I, secretly ridiculing the absurdity of my remark.

"I don't think that was the reason," he answered, "although she is nervous. She is courageous in many things—would ride in a steeple-chase, let off a cannon, or handle a spider. But in society she is very bashful and shy, will shrink within herself if she finds that she attracts attention (which she generally does), and,

I really believe, would prefer to lead a forlorn hope up a hill, than parade to and fro before rows of lookers-on, such as you get at the seaside, and in public gardens."

"She doesn't give me the impression of being nervous in any sense," I answered, thinking how true was the saying, that the last person to know a child's character was the parent.

The subject was changed by his asking me what I thought of the grounds I praised everything. I had made up my mind to reverse the Horatian precept, and do nothing but admire. However, the grounds really deserved my admiration. They were richly wooded, lavishly stocked, covering altogether not less than fifteen acres. My uncle was very communicative and affectionate, held my arm

as we wandered, and gave me a long account of his early life, his prejudices, tastes, and present love of seclusion. He had but very few neighbours, which, he said, was one great reason for his purchasing the property.

"I have outlived my love of society," he remarked. "The friends I cared for are gone, and I have neglected Johnson's advice to keep friendship in repair by forming new attachments. Dinner parties and balls are no treats to me. The tone of society has changed wonderfully within the last twenty years. There is little or no conversation, no friendly rivalries of wit, none of that heartiness which used to make our old social gatherings so enjoyable. However, I have little to complain of. No man can be alone who has his books. Do you remember what

Macaulay says of them? 'These are the old friends who are never seen with new faces, who are the same in wealth and in poverty, in glory and obscurity. With the dead there is no rivalry. In the dead there is no change.'

"But doesn't your daughter care for society?"

"No. If she did she should have it."

"How does she pass the time?"

"In sewing and reading and writing: and latterly in shooting. You smile! Well, shooting does seem a queer pastime for a young lady to indulge in, but I really don't see why a girl shouldn't amuse herself with a pistol if she has the courage. My objection is not a conventional one. I fear that she will one day injure herself. But for that, I can

discover no reason why a girl living in the country shouldn't shoot at a mark, as girls frequently in town amuse themselves by shooting in saloons erected for that purpose."

"Is the revolver her own that I saw in her hand?"

"No, it is mine. She took it out of my bed-room, and has kept it ever since."

"Is she as fond as you of books?"

"She is a great reader," he answered with a smile that seemed like an admission of my peculiar right to make these enquiries. "I am sometimes quite astonished by the information she possesses in directions which even professed students find too dry and uninviting to pursue."

"Good gracious!" I thought, "what a

delusion he is labouring under! I would bet a hundred pounds Theresa couldn't write a dozen lines that shouldn't contain half as many blunders."

Thus conversing, we reached the stables, where I found three fine horses, one of which he pointed out as his daughter's. This supplied him with a text for a long discourse on the subject of breeding horses; he then branched off into topics connected with the Stock Exchange, and finally, after an absence of nearly an hour, reconducted me to the house.

CHAPTER V.

"'Twas night, calm night, the moon was high."

Ancient Mariner.

TEAZER and I had very little to say to each other for the rest of the evening. I was really so afraid of her that I had not the courage to be polite. When I offered to take her cup from her, she looked at me so angrily and clung to the saucer so tenaciously that I might well have thought she regarded me as a thief, who wanted to make away with her father's crockery. Her manners were deplorably vulgar. She lay back in an

arm-chair, and stuck her legs out in such a way that I wondered her father didn't jump up and kick them in.

And what extraordinary delusion could he be labouring under in believing her well-read? He left the room for a short time during the evening, and finding myself alone with my half-civilised cousin, I felt myself under an obligation to address her. Willing to take her father's word that she was well-read, I thought I would get her upon the subject of books, and asked her that very tea-party question, who was her favourite author.

"The 'Family Herald,'" she answered.

I burst into a laugh. Her reply was so ridiculous, that I couldn't have preserved my gravity had she even produced her revolver.

"Your papa told me," said I, "that you are a very great reader."

"And what right have you to doubt his word?"

"Pray don't think I do," I stammered, rendered somewhat apprehensive by a gleam in her eyes.

"What made you laugh at me?"

"I thought you were laughing at me."

"Don't flatter yourself," she exclaimed, with an air of great contempt. "I must like people to laugh at them."

Offended, and even disgusted, I turned away from her; but looking round a moment after, with the intention of speaking, I caught her smiling, though the smile instantly vanished when our eyes met.

"Miss Hargrave, it is very plain," said

I, "that I am an unwelcome guest. Had I foreseen the annoyance my intrusion would have caused you, I should certainly not have accepted your father's invitation. However, I must entreat you to bear with me until to-morrow, when I will take care to please you by returning to Updown."

"I have not asked you to go," she answered. "You are not my guest, but my father's. He asked you down for himself, not for me; so, providing you don't trouble me, you may stop as long as you please."

"Trouble you!" I exclaimed, warmly. "How have I troubled you? I have only been in the house a few hours. But I can remedy that by asking your father to allow me to use the library, or any room but this, until the train leaves

to-morrow, and then we need not meet."

"I hope you are not going to turn out a tale-bearer, and set my father against me."

"What in heaven's name do you mean?"

"Oh, you are quite welcome to swear, sir. But let me assure you, I am not to be frightened by oaths."

"Oaths!" I stammered. But what use reasoning with a woman who manifestly was not in possession of her reason? I considered that I had been already a great deal too condescending. I had forgotten my dignity, and provoked a most audacious snubbing by an amiability that was totally at variance with those high and splendid conceptions which had hitherto characterised

my self-estimates. No wonder my aunt had guessed that I would not like Teazer. "Teazer!" That was a dog's name, and it suited my cousin to perfection. But did she behave to everybody as she behaved to me? Impossible. She wouldn't have a friend. Perhaps she hadn't. Perhaps her temper and gross manners were the real cause of her father's retired life; and yet, hadn't I heard from somebody or other that she had had admirers, and received even an offer of marriage from an individual whose name figured in Debrett's List? Nonsense! this must have been said merely to put me in conceit with the girl, and set me on the high road to courtship. Why, the cook downstairs could teach her better manners than she had. It was a great pity. I felt sorry

for her. She was, undeniably, good-looking; her eyes magnificent—splendid contradictions to her character. Watching her, when she was silent, I could have sworn, had I not known the truth about her nature, that she really possessed the profound passions and fine qualities her father strangely found in her. Though she threw her arms and legs about in the wildest search after inelegance, the utmost uncouthness of posture could scarcely deform or even qualify the inexpressible suggestions of grace with which her noble form was full fraught.

Her father came in with his hearty smile, and I envied him the affectionate glance he received from her. How was it that she could never look at me without a sneer or a frown? What was

there in me to challenge her contempt? If there was one thing I used to pique myself upon more than another, it was my success with the ladies. At Longueville I was always in request. No picnic was planned, no ball or open-air *fête* given, in which my name was not conspicuous. I shall not be accused of blabbing, if I modestly assert that, on Valentine's Day, I would receive as many as twenty letters, many of which were original poetry: and, on New Years' Day, was I ever forgotten by Eugenie, by Sophie, by Marie, or by Celestine? Teazer was my St. Helena. What satisfaction in recalling my victories, the loving sighs and ogles that attended my gilded progress, now that my charms were exiled and lodged upon a barren rock?

Bah! what need I care? wasn't I in love with Conny? wasn't I pledged to that golden-haired goddess? Bore I in my heart no memory of her deep, deep eyes, to compensate me for the contempt that gleamed in Teazer's gaze, for the sneers that curled her decidedly beautiful lip? I might regret that she had not found me as conquering as *others* had done, that on my return to Updown I might bare my heart to Conny, and cry, "Behold! here are thy lineaments—thine only! Arrows barbed by beauty have been shot by eyes the most entrancing, and have glanced harmless from the adamant on which love hath painted in imperishable colours thy transcendent graces!" I say, it was only for Conny's sake that I regretted Theresa didn't find me irresistible. My

vanity was not concerned—oh, certainly not. It was nothing to me—a young man—that a handsome woman should treat me as a baboon. Oh, no, nothing. My pride bled—for Conny.

At ten o'clock Theresa went to bed. She gave me a finger to shake, but embraced her father as if he were her lover.

We were now in the parlour with cigars and spirits on the table. O'Twist, on placing these refreshments before us, had stared at me in the most outrageous manner. I could have punched his head, so angry did his insolence make me.

"Is that fellow mad?" I asked my uncle.

"Why, what makes you think so?"

"His trick of staring. At dinner his

eye-balls stood out a foot beyond his cheeks, so intent was his gaze. Is he a Fenian, and does he mistake me for a constable?"

"Pooh, pooh, this is your fancy, my dear boy. O'Twist is the most harmless, good-natured creature in the whole world, and the politest. Corpulent as he is, I can assure you, on occasions he can comport himself with the dignity of a Lord Mayor. He often blunders, but as often recovers himself with capital Irish humour and grace."

My uncle is a most extraordinary person, I thought. Whatever I find fault with he commends, and strangely, commends for the very qualities that are most wanting. I had too much good taste to pass any remarks upon his daughter's behaviour to me; he was

doing his utmost to make me comfortable, and it would be in the highest degree ungracious to grumble at this early stage. Yet as I was fully persuaded he had remarked his daughter's manner, I was much surprised that he did not offer some excuses for it. Of course I could understand his silence on the motive of my visit. If I didn't begin the subject, he couldn't. It was for me to fall in love with Theresa, and make her in love with me; until the pie was made, he couldn't very well put his finger in it. Let me confess I was heartily glad that delicacy *did* restrain him. Had he started the topic, in all probability I should have said something to offend him, for in the mood that then possessed me, nothing could have been more objectionable than

a reference to my uncle Tom's wild and preposterous scheme.

He talked to me a good deal about his brother's bank and banking in general, and sounded my knowledge of the business with a great number of questions.

"You quite justify Tom's opinion of you," he exclaimed. "I should never have thought you capable of acquiring so much information in so short a space of time. Banking is a very fine business, and if Tom takes you into partnership, which he talks of doing, I see no reason why you shouldn't become a very rich man."

This was the nearest approach to his brother's "scheme" which he made. I listened, expecting him to begin on the subject of my marriage with his daughter;

but he immediately changed the conversation by inviting me to make myself thoroughly at home while I stayed with him, to call for anything I wanted, to use his horses—in short, to treat him as I treated my uncle Tom, “than which,” he added, “I shall expect no better compliment from you.”

I wished, secretly, that he would not be so hospitable, for the kinder he was, the harder it would be to find an excuse to get away from the house.

At eleven o'clock I began to yawn, and seeing this, he conducted me to my bed-room. “We have no fixed breakfast hour,” said he, “so you may choose your own time to leave your bed. I rarely close my eyes before half-past four, and am therefore seldom up before ten. But Teazer is usually down by half-past

eight, so you may depend upon finding somebody to look after you."

I shook hands with him, and he went away. I felt more wearied than sleepy. The night was very sultry, and I threw my window wide open before getting into bed. A brilliant moon rode high, and whilst I watched it I thought of Conny, and wondered if her dear eyes were upon it, and if she were thinking of me. Sweet girl! I pictured her delicate features upturned to the benign light, and the chastity they would take in the radiance. What a contrast between the two cousins! What a pity Theresa was so unmannerly! Her face haunted me. I am afraid it sometimes eclipsed Conny's. How came it so gross a mind should be so finely clothed? From what did her eyes take their fire? Surely not

from her heart. After all, what was she but a handsome animal? She could shoot, she could ride; she was very fit for the backwoods. What a wretched voice she had! what a feeble touch! And her father declared she could play and sing well! How slangy her language was, how beautiful her complexion, how inelegant her movements, how perfect her figure, how ——!

Here I fell asleep.

I could hardly have slept longer than half-an-hour, when I started up broad awake, and stared about me. The moon was still high; the room was filled with its light.

What had awakened me?

Here something knocked three times upon the door. I presumed that the knocks fell upon the door; but, for all

I knew, the sounds might have come from the floor, the ceiling, or the walls.

Here was an old house! Had it a ghost?

I sat upright in my bed, meaning to wait until the knocks sounded again before I called "Come in." To my horror, the handle of the door was turned with exquisite caution, and the door was opened stealthily.

Burglars! I thought, and instantly looked towards the fender.

A short fat man in his shirt, with braces hanging loosely about his breeches, stepped into the room, but on catching sight of me, fell back a step and stood staring. It was O'Twist. The moonlight made him deadly white, and I scarcely knew him in his undress.

"What do you want?" I gasped, not

doubting that the man had hoped to find me asleep, and to steal my watch and purse, and perhaps to murder me.

"I tort I'd look in to see if you were all right, sor," he answered.

"Right! what do you mean? I was asleep."

"Thrue, sor."

Here he advanced, went to the window, pulled down the sash, and drew the curtains. I was so much amazed by his actions that I could barely articulate. Was he walking in his sleep? Impossible. Somnambulists can't converse. Was he labouring under a sudden and severe access of insanity? Idiot that I was to leave my razor exposed on the dressing table!

"What are you doing?" I gurgled.

"Preevinting the moon from shoining

upon your honour's head," he replied, gazing complacently round him, and then moving towards the door.

"What's the moon got to do with you?" I cried. "I always sleep with my window open in summer. How dare you close it without my leave, or enter my room at all?"

"Niver moind, sor, niver moind," he answered soothingly and blandly. "Your honour will be grateful to me in the marning whin you foind oi've saved yer from taking cowl'd."

And so saying, he walked out of the room, closing the door behind him.

I sprang out of bed in a great passion, pulled back the curtain, flung the sash up, and then went to the door, intending to lock it, and save myself from the villain's intentions, whatever they were;

but to my deep annoyance I found there was no key. To remedy this, I thrust a chair under the handle, and a small table against the chair, and got into bed, puzzling my brains over the fellow's design, and wondering what my uncle would think, when I told him that his sleek O'Twist was a midnight ruffian. "May I be hanged twenty times over, if I don't sleep at Updown to-morrow night," I growled, kicking about under the single sheet, and wishing my uncle Dick, and Teazer, and his house, and his servants, and everything that belonged to him in Jehanum.

My anger, however, didn't prevent me from falling asleep. In truth, I had been thoroughly tired by my journey, my walk from the station, the great heat, and the fatiguing dance my uncle

had led me through the grounds. But I was not to sleep long. A violent crash awoke me, and my first impression was that the house had been struck by a thunderbolt.

I hopped out of bed wide awake, and stood watching the fat figure of O'Twist, who was picking up the chair and table he had knocked over in pushing open the door.

"Be off!" I shouted, darting at him.

He skipped aside, his braces trailing in his wake, but instead of leaving the room, seized a chair, which he brandished with both hands, crying, "You'd bettther not touch me! I'm a moorderous man whin my blood is up! you'd bettther not touch me!"

"I'll kill you," I gasped, "if you don't leave this room at once! How

dare you intrude upon me a second time?"

"Let me shut the window, sor—let me pull the curtains tew — you'll be much aisier in you're moind wid de moon hid—indade you will, sor," he answered, jamming himself into a corner and holding the chair over his head.

I looked at him aghast. It was quite clear to me that he was raving mad. The moonlight had penetrated his brain, and he was clamouring to have it hid! Wasn't it well known, that all mad people raged when the moon was full? I mustn't be violent. No, no. He must be humoured, or he might dash my brains out.

"Look here," said I, "if I close the window and draw the curtains, will you

promise not to break in upon me again?"

"If you'll promise to kape the moon hid."

"Anything to get rid of you," I said; "but I pledge you my word of honour, if you break your promise I'll throw you out of the window. Hear that! and to-morrow ——"

But I checked myself. I had threatened enough. I might drive him frantic. There was no key to the door, and nothing could keep him from crawling in and cutting my throat, should I again fall asleep, but the bed or the chest of drawers against the door, neither of which I was able to stir.

He put the chair down cautiously, edged towards the window, watching me intently, whilst I backed from him as

he approached, watching *him* intently, pulled down the sash, drew the curtains, and slid sideways towards the door.

"You'll kape your word, sor?" he inquired.

"Yes, and you had better keep yours, or look out!"

He closed the door, and I was again left alone.

A long time passed before I fell asleep. I never expected for a moment that this madman would not once more pop his vile head in to see if the moon was hid, and lay for a great while in a state of passionate anxiety waiting for him to appear, that I might spring upon and beat him. Gradually the moonshine passed off the window, and the room grew dark. Then another kind of light began to creep upon the blind; it

brightened and broadened ; the sparrows twittered ; and it was clear daylight when I dropped off into a very uneasy slumber.

I was awakened by the voice of O'Twist, informing me that it was half-past eight. I bade him in a stern voice, which I hoped would carry terror with it through the panels of the door, to bring me some hot water. But he had gone away. As I was in no temper to lie in bed, I jumped up, meaning to shave in cold water, then to hasten down-stairs, give Theresa (if she were up), a piece of my mind, wait until my uncle left his room, that I might acquaint him with the gross treatment to which I had been subjected by his servant, and then quit the house. But when I looked for my

razor, it was gone! I was thunder-struck. I perfectly remembered leaving it on the toilet-table after unpacking my travelling bag, and I was equally sure it was in the same place when O'Twist first entered the room, for I recalled a cold shudder that had passed through me on reflecting what might happen should the maniac's eye fasten upon the cold steel. Had he taken it? No doubt he had, and in all human probability with the intention of using it against me. What miraculous interposition of Providence had saved my throat?

CHAPTER VI.

Spark. "Very droll and extravagantly comic, I must confess ; ha, ha, ha !"

The Country Girl.

I MADE haste to dress, not caring a fig that Theresa should see my beard—which to tell the truth, owing to my being fair, was scarcely perceptible—and went down-stairs, keeping a sharp look-out for O'Twist, from whom I might have I knew not what to dread.

The drawing-room door was open, and on entering, I found Theresa arranging some freshly-picked flowers in a vase.

She instantly dropped her work on seeing me, and exclaimed very petulantly,

“I wish people would knock when they come into a room.”

“I’ll knock when I wear a livery,” I replied, “not before.”

“Do you sometimes wear a livery?” she inquired.

“Miss Hargrave,” I exclaimed sternly, “I beg that you will cease your badinage. During the short time I have been in your house, I have had to submit to very bad treatment. It is absurd to pretend that the behaviour you show to me is the behaviour you show to others. My conviction is that you have falsified your character only that you may drive me back to Updown. You have attained your end. I leave you

to-day; but I shall take care," I added, feeling myself grow red in the face, "before I go, to acquaint your father with the singular rudeness you have been pleased to treat his guest with. Did I imagine that you had the faintest perception of your duty as a hostess, I might be tempted to complain to you of the insolence I have met with from that scoundrel footman of yours, O'Twist. But he has no doubt been licensed by *your* behaviour, and thinks himself perfectly privileged to enter my room at night, take unwarrantable liberties with the window, and steal my razor."

There was an expression on her face, as she listened to me, which suggested that every moment she was about to burst into a fit of laughter. She heard me to the end, and then said,

"Have you made up your mind to go to-day?"

"Yes," I cried, indignantly. "I shall only wait to see my uncle."

"Then," said she, coolly, "I will spare your nerves the anguish of a meeting."

"A what?" I exclaimed.

"Since you have been in this house," she replied, "your behaviour to me has been *most* insulting. You have pretended to be deaf when I spoke to you. You have ridiculed my book-learning. You have, I am sure, made the most odious comparisons between me and my cousin Constance; and lastly, you took the unwarrantable liberty of telling my father of my reception of you in the avenue yesterday, and earning me a reprimand. I had resolved that nothing less than a duel could wipe away the disgrace you

have sought to cast upon me ; but since you are leaving us, I need not exact this proof of a courage you *boast* of, but which I thoroughly question !”

“Are you mad ?” I burst out. “But you are. O’Twist is mad ! you are all mad ! And if I were to stay here another day, I should go mad too ! A duel—with a *woman* !”

“Pray,” said she, scornfully, “don’t try to make my sex a defence for your fears. If you have a mind to prove your courage, there are two pistols upstairs, and I shall be happy to accompany you to the back of the avenue at once. My father will not be down for another hour, so we need fear no interruption.”

“God help you !” said I. And I added, “What a fool I was to leave

Grove End! There, at least, they know how to treat a gentleman."

"A gentleman!" she exclaimed. "I am very sure that were you to behave to Conny as you have behaved to me——"

"Are you aware," I interrupted her, "that in mentioning the name of Conny, you are speaking of the sweetest and most womanly of girls? who would no more insult me as you do, than I would knowingly insult you?"

"Do you like her?"

"Like her? I love her!" I exclaimed.

"Are you in earnest?" she asked.

"Of course I am. I loved her from the moment I set eyes on her. I would marry her to-morrow. I am only waiting until I have taught her to love me, to marry her."

She stared for a moment or two with

an expression of profound incredulity in her eyes ; and almost immediately a deep and burning blush overspread her cheeks. I seemed to witness a change come over her as astounding as any that was ever wrought by Harlequin's wand. "If I had *only* known!" she exclaimed, and hurried out of the room.

I stamped my foot with impatience.

"What is the meaning of all this?"

I cried. "What earthly motive can these relations have for surrounding, and bewildering, and insulting me with their confounded conundrums?"

I paced about the room waiting for Theresa to return, when I at least expected she would enter into a full explanation of her extraordinary behaviour. Half-an-hour passed, and I was still alone. The grounds looked tempt-

ing; I entered them, and began with regular steps to measure the wide extent of the lawn, cudgelling my brains the while for a clue to Theresa's conduct, and reviling the sluggish habits of my uncle, which delayed my hope of being enlightened.

Presently O'Twist came out of the house. He approached me with the most humble aspect that can be figured, and on my halting, stood still, twitching a fore-lock.

"I humbly ax your honour's pardon for de liberty I took wid your honour last night. It wor all a mistake, sor; and Miss Theresa's bid me come to you now and apologise."

"What do you mean by a mistake?" I inquired, severely.

"Why, sor, I was desired to kape

me eye upon you, and at night-time to look in upon your honour in bed, to see dat de moon didn't shine upon your head, sor; for I was tould dat you were not in your right sines, and dat de moon so excited your hónor, dat dere was no telling what moorderous thricks you moightn't be playin' wid de household."

"And who told you all this?"

"Miss Theresa, and she bid me tell you it was herself as set me to watch you, sor."

"Oh!" I exclaimed, a light beginning to break. "And did she order you to take my razor away?"

"Dat was me own sthrategim."

"And pray how come you to find out now that I am not mad?"

"Why, yer honour, you're not de

gintleman Miss Theresa tort you. I'm sure, sir, I'm very much ashamed of de inconvainance and throuble I've put your honour tew, and most humbly ax your pardon."

Here his hand vibrated at his forehead.

"All right; say no more. I can see you are not to blame," I replied, inwardly grappling with a very elusive idea that had been suggested by the man's apologies. He retired, looking very contrite and ashamed, and I resumed my walk.

It was clear now that my first perceptions of my cousin's character were right, and that the extravagant part she had played was assumed, though for what motive I had yet to learn. Before long, O'Twist came out again, and asked me,

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with an air of obsequious deference, if I would take breakfast.

"I'll wait," I answered, "for my uncle," who, as I spoke, threw open his bed-room window, waved his hand, and called out that he would be with me in a few minutes. Those few minutes lasted a long time. I grew so tired of waiting that I returned to the house. It was nearly half-past ten, and I had not breakfasted! What is the meaning of all this? I thought. Is it my uncle's turn now to play me a trick? At last I heard his boots creaking on the stairs, and he came into the room slowly, with the air of a man oppressed with trouble.

"I hardly know how to face you," he exclaimed, taking my hand. "I am ashamed of myself, ashamed of my daughter, ashamed of my house—of every-

thing! I have heard the whole story from Theresa, and have no words to express my annoyance to think that you should have been made the victim of so flagrant a violation of the commonest rules of politeness and hospitality."

"Before I can answer you," I said, "pray help me out of the fog in which I am still involved. What is the meaning of all this?"

"Breakfast, sor," cried O'Twist from the door.

"Of course you have breakfasted!" exclaimed my uncle.

"Not yet."

"Not breakfasted! and how long is it since you left your room?"

"Two hours."

"Heaven forgive us!" he groaned; "it is not enough that they should wantonly

insult you—they mean to starve you as well! Come!” he cried, catching me by the arm, and hurrying me into the dining-room, “not a word—not a word until you have breakfasted.”

His distress was really genuine; and I felt for him. I could not better show my sympathy than by attending to his requests; and so, without a word, fell to the capital repast before me. For his part, he ate little or nothing; all his time was employed in watching me; and had I been wronged in the most atrocious manner, I don't think his face could have expressed keener remorse.

“Pray,” said I, at last, “don't allow a trifle like this to vex you.”

“My boy,” he answered, wiping his forehead with an immense pocket-handkerchief; “I am fifty-five years of age,

and this is the very first occasion in my life on which a guest of mine has had reason to complain of the treatment he has received under my roof. Were you a stranger to me, the indignities that have been heaped upon you would be felt by me keenly enough; but you are my brother's son, and have a particular claim upon our kindness. I consider that no apologies we can make ought to entitle us to your forgiveness."

"You really judge the matter too seriously. If I had less conceit and more penetration, I should have seen at once that Theresa was acting a feigned part. But where is she? I don't think she has breakfasted."

"She is hiding her face for shame."

"Please beg her not to do so."

"She is the most extraordinary crea-

ture on the face of the earth," he exclaimed. "What do you think was her reason for making such a donkey [of herself? She has told me her story—and, as you have finished breakfast, you shall hear it."

He pushed his chair from the table, and began to speak with great energy.

"She was under the impression that you had come here with the intention of making love to, and marrying her. I had previously told her exactly the nature of your uncle Tom's scheme, and that I liked it, and should be well pleased to see it carried out. She heard me without offering a single remark. She asked no questions about you—but simply inquired when you were coming. And now she has confessed to me that she was determined not to be married

to any man by *contrivance*. I knew she had a proud nature—but I never suspected she was so silly as to suppose that, unless she should really love you well enough to be your wife, I should wish her to marry you.”

“Ah!” I cried: “then her object was to disgust me.”

“Precisely; and what does the minx do? She hangs about the avenue until she spies you coming, and then salutes you with a pistol shot! She repels your politeness with the most uncouth rudeness! In order still further to embarrass and disgust you, she coolly tells O'Twist that you are not always in your right senses, and desires him to keep his eye on you whenever he has the opportunity of doing so, particularly during meal-times, lest you should snatch

up a knife, and attempt to murder one of us! A better tool than O'Twist for her sorry purposes she couldn't have hit upon. He is not only credulous, but superstitious, and, but for this discovery, would have teased your soul out of you. The idiot believes every word she says, and obeys her injunctions with even more zeal than she could have hoped for. She had told him to enter your room at night (not doubting he would awaken and terrify you), and pull down your blind, should he find it up, lest the moonshine should unduly excite you. The trick was so far clever, that she might depend at least upon both of you thinking the other mad. God knows how the joke might have ended, had you lost your temper. Then again, when I ask her to play and sing, she

breaks into hideous noises, so resolved is she that you shall think her repulsive in every possible point of view."

"No, no. Not from every point of view—she couldn't deform her beauty. But the truth is, she wanted to drive me out of the house."

"Yes, that was her object; and it is impossible to conjecture what other tricks she might not have played you, had you not told her you were in love with Conny." (I blushed. Somehow or other I felt ashamed that *he* should know this.) "*Then* her false character fell from her. She saw the blunder she had perpetrated, the unnecessary cruelty of her tricks; her own conduct terrified her, and I pledge you my word, when I left her, she was crying like a child."

"Oh, pray," I cried, starting up, "let me go and assure her——"

"Let her cry," he interrupted me. "There may be more hysteria than remorse in her tears—though I am sure she is sorry enough. She imposed too heavy a part on herself; the imposture was too much for her strength. She never could have persisted in it. Her true nature would have broken through and would have betrayed her extraordinary motives."

"While her deception lasted, it was very clever. I really gave her credit for being the unmannerly young person she enacted. To be sure, I found it hard to reconcile her beauty with her gross behaviour, and, no doubt, had she carried on her deceit much longer, I should have found her out. But, before

that could have happened, she would have gained her object, for I had fully made up my mind to leave you to-day."

"Nonsense! I wouldn't have permitted it. I noticed that her behaviour was very extraordinary; but to tell you frankly the truth, I thought the whole thing a mere piece of coquetry. After that singing bout of hers, I was persuaded that her reason for acting so strangely was merely to make her real nature and capacities more striking, by the force of contrast when she chose to exhibit them. Women will descend to any absurdities to gain admiration."

"She evidently didn't want me to admire her," said I, laughing.

"Not the least galling part of the business is the doubt her deceit implies

of *me*. Could she—could you imagine for a moment that I could ever sanction her marriage with a man she didn't love? If she can suspect that I would part with her on commercial grounds only, she does me a far greater wrong than she has done you."

"It is her reserve that has brought all this about," said I. "Had she asked a few questions, nothing could have happened to trouble us."

"She *is* reserved—shy, as I told you—and confoundedly proud. She owned to me just now, that the idea of her becoming your wife in order to carry out her uncle's and my wishes was abhorrent to her. 'If I am to be loved, papa,' she said, 'I must be loved without regard to the wishes or objections of outsiders.'"

“My views exactly,” I exclaimed, “I never came here with the intention of making love to her. I wanted to know her and enjoy your hospitality and society, and uncle Tom could have no right to expect more from me. I always was and always shall be opposed to marriages ‘of convenience,’” I continued warmly. “A man and a woman are brought together without love, without sympathy, without probably one interest in common, save that of mutual disgust. How can they be happy? You may tell them that their marriage will fill their pockets with money; but how many pounds sterling does an ounce of pure love cost? Where are they to go to market for their everyday moral wants? I am too poor, and I hope too wise to sneer at money; but in my humble

opinion the man who should set to work to make a map of human life, would not blunder in putting all the best things outside the money line."

CHAPTER VII.

"A ship and a woman are ever repairing."

Jacula Prudentum.

My conversation did not terminate with that very fine philosophical stroke you have just read; but it is not worth while recording what followed, as it consisted entirely of apologies and excuses on my uncle's side, and polite protests and entreaties on mine.

Indeed, now that the trick was exposed and Theresa repentant, I was inclined to witness something exceedingly diverting in the whole performance, and to think

my cousin no ordinary genius for so cleverly planning and so bravely executing a very repulsive part. I could not quite believe that she was so repentant as her papa represented her. Somewhat ashamed of herself she might indeed be, not so much on account of her vagaries, as because she had so instantly dropped her mask on hearing I was in love with Conny. There was a confession of weakness in this she would not like to remember.

Meanwhile my uncle was extraordinarily polite. The kind-hearted old man was obviously anxious to make me all the amends in his power. He planned a fishing excursion, a riding party, a drive to some famous ruins ; he begged me to suggest my own amusements. He had an engagement at half-past eleven to

meet some man on business at the village, whither he asked me to accompany him. I told him I should prefer rambling amongst the trees in the grounds, the truth being, I wanted to see Theresa and become friends with her.

"Very well," said he; "do whatever you please. I shall be back by lunch-time, and then we'll think over some way of getting rid of the afternoon."

His horse was saddled and brought to the door; he sprang upon it in fine style considering his great bulk, and with a kindly nod at me, trotted slowly down the avenue.

Seeing no signs of Theresa, I thought I could not better pass the time than by writing a description of my reception and adventures to Conny, and went into

the house meaning to settle down to a long letter. As I passed through the hall, I noticed the album lying upon the table in the drawing-room. So I took hold of the book, and, like an honest lover that I was, fell to a maudlin perusal of my mistress's countenance. But very often my eyes wandered to Theresa's handsome face, and though my heart reproached me for the involuntary judgment, I could not help confessing that of the two cousins Conny was decidedly the inferior in every physical respect. Nothing more natural, of course, being a fair man, than that when I had two pretty girls before me, she of the dark eyes should touch me more nearly than she of the blue. You will understand, I am speaking now as a connoisseur—of the effect produced upon my mind; it was

a criticism with which my heart had nothing to do.

I was leaving the drawing-room, *en route* for the library, where I expected to find pen and paper, when I met my cousin face to face. She blushed and stood still—I think she had imagined I had gone out with her father—then promptly held out her hand, which you may believe I took readily enough.

“What do you think of me?” she asked.

“What, but that you are a very fine actress, and acquitted yourself to perfection in as difficult a part as you could have chosen.”

“If you had only told me that you were in love with Conny, I should have been as anxious as papa to make you welcome,” she said.

"We are both in an explanatory humour," I replied, "so let us sit down and talk the matter out."

She seated herself—very differently, I promise you, from the awkward fashion in which she had hitherto performed that action—her manner, indeed, was abrupt, but that was owing to nervousness; for the rest, she was as subdued as Katherine after five acts of Petruchio.

"Your father tells me," said I, "you were under the impression I had come here to make love to you on Stock Exchange principles, and marry you as a commercial undertaking. Nothing under yonder sky could be wider from the truth than that."

"When papa informed me of your proposed visit," she answered, keeping her eyes bent downwards—and now that

she was womanly and well-behaved, I could appreciate the surprising length of her eyelashes, and the abundant folds of her rich brown hair—"he quite gave me to understand that it was his and Tom's wish that I should marry you. I said nothing—but I inwardly vowed that no earthly power should induce me to accept a man's hand under any other conditions than my own. I did not wish to pain papa by expressing the opinions I felt, and so resolved to make you disgusted with me, and drive you out of the house as soon as possible."

"You succeeded in everything."

"I am very sorry," she continued, blushing again, though meeting my eyes; "you didn't deserve such bad treatment. Had you been a fop, or a silly fellow, I should not regret tormenting you. But

you are neither, and bore your sufferings so good-naturedly, that my conscience pricked me every time I forced a sneer, or answered you rudely."

"Had you treated me twenty times more rudely than you did," I answered, "you have said more than enough to entitle you to the fullest forgiveness. I applaud your motives highly, and think so well of your resolution not to be made love to without your consent, that I am only surprised you should have behaved with so much moderation."

"Don't be ironical. Moderation! Think of O'Twist last night!"

"Poor O'Twist! had I not thought him mad, I should have thrashed him. But I was really afraid not only to raise my hand, but even to show my indignation, not knowing what might

become of me, should the lunatic's rage be excited!"

"I can only repeat," said she, "that I am very sorry it has happened. I will not say so again: for one apology is enough, when you are sincere. Papa was too emphatic. He fully impressed me with the idea that a marriage between us was settled, and—and I was *determined* not to be married in such an off-hand way."

And then a bright blush glowed in those cheeks, which, a few hours before, I could have sworn were incapable of blushing; she tried to smile, but looked terribly confused and nervous.

"You must have a great deal of courage to handle a pistol as you do," said I, willing to relieve her by changing the subject. "All the girls I have

known would rather play with a black beetle than gunpowder."

"I began to shoot long before I heard you were coming," she answered, quickly.

"Yes, I know. Your father says you are a capital shot."

"I believe I am. You will think the pastime very unfeminine; but it is a caprice of mine, and papa is very indulgent."

"You are also a very courageous rider, I hear."

"There are very few horses I should fear to mount."

"And now, Theresa, will you confess that your favourite author is not the 'Family Herald?'"

She laughed outright at this, and exclaimed:

"The most wonderful part of it all is, that I should ever have got you to believe the nonsense I talked."

"It is no proof of my stupidity, but of your cleverness."

"Oh, how rude I was!" she cried, looking at me almost gaily, and losing her subdued manner. "How you stared when I refused to take your arm and to give you my cup to put down! I was silly to misbehave myself so to *you*; but rather than allow any man to hang about me with sickly compliments, owing wholly to commercial inspirations, I would have acted ten times more boldly and rudely, and never have rested until I had driven him out of the house, detesting my very name!"

"I believe you," said I, amused by the gleam in her eyes, and by her recurrence

to some points of the character she had discarded.

“But we won’t talk of it. Tell me about yourself and Conny. Are you engaged?”

“No. Uncle Tom refuses his consent; and I ought to add that Conny isn’t positively in love with me yet—at least she says she isn’t.”

“I don’t suppose Tom’s sanction would trouble you much, would it?” she asked, making me smile, not only by her familiar reference to her uncle, but by her off-hand manner, which, now that it was associated with nothing of rudeness, I found extremely agreeable, piquant, and characteristic.

“If Conny loved me, her father’s consent, I believe, would follow. Her mamma is strongly on my side.”

"I should never bother about relations' opinions much," said she. "People only marry each other, not each other's family. Why does Tom object?"

"Because I've got no money."

She pondered my reply for a little in silence, then took up the album, opened it at Conny's picture, and mused over it.

"She is very pretty, isn't she? Her fair hair will keep her a young looking woman when she is far beyond middle-age. I only wonder she hasn't married long ago. But they live as quietly at Grove End as we do, and their neighbours are about as cheerful and hospitable as ours."

She closed the album and added, "If you marry her, I hope you'll both be happy. You'll find her staunch, I am

sure, if once you succeed in winning her love."

"I am sure of that, too. What deep eyes she has! Her character has sometimes puzzled me. Her mind is so nimble, that it seems to be frisking about in a dozen meanings at once."

"That kind of nimbleness makes a woman charming. Your plain-speaker is rarely followed by the men."

"There are so few men of whom anything complimentary can be said, that there is little marvel we should shun candid women. It would have done me good had you continued your downright part for a week or two; you would have taught me to know some of my weaknesses. As it is, I should say I have not lost less than three pounds weight of conceit since yesterday."

"But what have I lost? First impressions are everything—and I question if you will ever overcome the dislike of me I tried to produce."

"I am not so stubborn as you think. But you hate compliments, and so I'll hold my tongue, lest I should be misconstrued."

To this she made no reply; but, leaving her chair, went to the window, where she stood for a minute or two. I could not help watching her fine figure with admiration. Had Conny been present I could not have admired Theresa less. I had already heard and seen enough to enable me to judge how odious the character she had assumed must have been to her, and the glad relief with which she had flung it aside. But what resolution was hers to give her strength

to carry out so singular an imposture ! What force of character needful to beat down and silence those instincts which, as certainly as she was a woman, would clamour for quite a different construction from what she was determined I should put upon her nature !

“I desired the footman,” said she, approaching me, “to apologise to you this morning ; but in order to get him to do so, I had to invent a little fable, which, no doubt, you will call a fib. I told him you were not the gentleman I had expected—leaving him to make out the riddle as his Irish brains best could. In one sense, you are *not* the gentleman I had expected. Still, unavoidable as the equivocation was, it annoys me intensely. True it is that one folly begets another, and a worse. I must devise some expia-

tion. Exact some penance—I promise you shall be obeyed.”

Now where was my wit, that I didn't say something handsome? 'Twas ever thus. A capital answer occurred next day. But it was too late.

“I want nothing but your good opinion. I have innocently put you to a great deal of trouble. All I require is your forgiveness for having made you very uneasy.”

“Then let us shake hands and be good friends; as cousins we ought to like each other. And since there is no likelihood of our being married, there is no reason why we should be enemies.”

I pressed her hand warmly, laughing at her queer speech, and her blunt manner; but admiring too.

At this moment the door opened, and

in came my uncle, who had evidently entered the house by one of the side doors.

"I wish persons would knock when they come into a room," I whispered with soft significance, releasing her hand, and catching sight of the conscious blush with which she received the remark she had herself greeted me with not very long before.

My uncle here burst into a roar of laughter.

"Good friends, hey?" cried he; "now, then, we shall be happy!"

And running up to the piano, he strummed and sang:

Time and chance are but a tide,

Ha! ha! the wooing o't!

Slighted love is sair to bide,

Ha! ha! the wooing o't;

Shall I, like a fool, quoth he,
For a haughty dizzie dee?
She may gae to France for me!
Ha! ha! the wooing o't!

Than which nothing could be more
ludicrously inappropriate.

"I thought you weren't coming back
until lunch-time," said I.

"I met a fellow with a message from
my man to say he couldn't meet me," he
answered.

CHAPTER VIII.

"But now we talk of mounting steed."

Hudibras.

AFTER lunch I wrote to Conny. I should like to see that letter now. I composed it as one of Johnson's poets wrote poetry: "with an incessant ambition of wit;" mentioned that little affair with O'Twist, but made no further reference to Teazer's treatment (holding that both she and her father would expect my silence); asked if I was missed, if there was anybody at Grove End who would particularly care

to see me back again; diversified my pregnant sentimental "asides" with well-laboured bursts of cynicism, and concluded four pages of close writing with a very eloquent, "Believe me," &c.

As I addressed the envelope, Theresa came into the library, and asked me if I would ride with her.

"I should greatly enjoy a ride," I answered, hardily; "but you mustn't expect to find me a very good horseman. However, providing my horse doesn't rear, I daresay I shall be able to hold on."

"You shall have papa's horse. He is very quiet."

"I don't think I could take a gate," said I.

"Oh, we'll keep to the main road."

This being settled, she went to get on

her habit. I was rather sorry I had no straps by me. I am aware that they are not much worn by riders ; but depend upon it, they are very useful to incipient horsemen, since they prevent the trowsers from mounting up to the knees, should the horse grow at all distracted. Hat-guards are also valuable. Indeed, a bad rider ought to be sewn into his clothes ; and it would not be sometimes amiss, if his clothes were also tacked on to the saddle.

In about ten minutes' time Theresa was ready. The horses were brought by the groom to the door : and my cousin mounted with fine grace. I, like a blockhead, clambered up the wrong side ; but though my uncle, as well as the groom and Teazer, was looking, nobody laughed ; and I had, therefore, the satis-

faction of believing I had acquitted myself well. To my great relief the animal, under my weight, stood as motionless as a clothes'-horse. Teazer's, on the other hand, began to dance, like one of your trained brutes at a circus, when the band strikes up.

"Here's a whip, sir," said the groom. I jerked the reins, my uncle waved his hand, my horse broke into a trot (I into a perspiration), off went Teazer's animal sideways, I watching the lateral beast with speechless anxiety, fearful every moment of running into him; we got out of the avenue into the high-road, and away we clattered—God help me!—under an Indian sun.

Teazer kept ahead of me for some ten minutes, her horse being very nettlesome and restive, and defying her restraint. I

had settled into a good solid trot, was growing used to the motion, and had no wish to gallop. However, Teazer slackened her pace after a little, and fell into a walk, which I thought uncommonly safe and agreeable.

"Where would you like to go?" she asked.

"Wherever you please."

"Shall we ride to Blenhall Abbey? We are on the road to it, and the ruins are well worth seeing."

"I shall be very glad."

Here her horse sprang forward, mine followed, and away we dashed at full gallop, I stooping my head like a hunchback to keep my hat on, and wondering what pleasure people could take in having their hearts shaken into their throats, and their midriffs into their boots. How-

ever, use will father other things besides those begot by sense ; and before long I not only began to discover that swift motion was a sensation by no means disagreeable, but found courage to raise my head and attend to my cousin's figure.

Although, in spite of my fashionable and aristocratic prejudices, I knew almost nothing about riding, the stable, or the turf, I had a good eye for picturesque combinations and graceful movements, for small waists and easy attitudes. I was therefore qualified to admire Theresa on horseback, nor did I require to be told that she was a splendid horsewoman. Even her man's hat could not deform the perfection of outline submitted to my following gaze by her noble figure. So much has been written about female

riders, that all description of Theresa in the saddle would be supererogatory, and I will therefore save you a long account here by briefly referring you for full information on this important subject to the Entertaining Library of six shillings, two shillings, one shilling, and sixpenny novels to be found at all bookstalls and railway stations in town and country.

"I am afraid you find it very hot," said she, checking her horse's canter and dropping alongside of me.

"It is rather hot," I answered, glancing at a sky whose colour would have figured well in a view of Palmyra. "But I am enjoying my ride very much."

"I could give you several jumps if you'd care about them. There are some good hedges yonder," and she pointed with her whip to the plains beneath.

"I am very well satisfied," I replied. "Let me see! There's the railway station, and yonder's the hot road I trudged along yesterday. The view from here is very pretty, but I fancy a ride would be more enjoyable in the cool of the evening. Hallo! are we to go down that hill?"

"Yes. Keep a firm hold of your reins."

We turned into an abominably steep lane. I shoved my feet well out into the stirrups, and uttered no observation whatever until we had reached the bottom. Then I exclaimed,

"Such a descent is enough to try the nerves of a mule."

"We shall meet with nothing but level roads now," said she. "Are you for a gallop?"

"No. Let's have a talk. . . . How superbly you ride, Theresa."

"Do I?"

"You make me feel as inelegant as a Hindoo, sitting like a tailor on an elephant's head."

"Have you ridden with Conny?"

"No. I don't think she rides, does she?"

"A little. She is not like me: she is womanly in her tastes and aversions."

"Oh, don't say that!" I exclaimed, not quite sure whether she meant to compliment herself or her cousin.

"She would never have played you such a trick as I did."

"Impossible to say. Had she misjudged the motive of my visit to Grove End—imagined, as you did, that I had come to make love to her for the sake

of her money—oh, Theresa! she might have poisoned me!”

“Tell me, do you think it is proper that a girl should be made love to only for her money?”

“Certainly not. I consider it insulting.”

“I acted wrongly in not giving myself time to find out what sort of a man you were, before I began my tricks. But then it would have been too late; for after you had seen me in my natural capacity, as the menagerie people say, shamming would have been ridiculous.”

“Don’t let us talk about anything that vexes us, Theresa. Yesterday is dead and gone, and our acquaintance dates from this morning. But there is one view of the question of marrying for money which ought to be considered:

Suppose a fellow falls in love with a girl who has a fortune? doesn't he run a great risk of being misjudged?"

"If a girl has any sense, she will soon see whether he is fond of her or not."

I shook my head.

"Some men flatter so well, feign so skilfully, appeal so dexterously to a woman's weaknesses, that it needs more clear-sightedness than most girls possess to divine either their real feelings or their real motives."

Her fine eyes sparkled as she answered, "That is why I hate flattery. Honest people won't flatter. I always look upon a compliment as the mask of some sentiment which would be very offensive were it exposed."

"That's an extreme view. A man may sometimes flatter with the wish to please;

and whom should he wish to please but his sweetheart?"

"I would rather not be complimented by the man I love."

"He'll have to be dumb, then," said I.

"I will agree with you in this," said she, with a smile, "a girl with money is under great disadvantages as regards courtship and marriage. For she may love a man whose sensitiveness finds an obstacle in her fortune, and keeps him back, lest a proposal should subject him to misconstruction. Or she may meet with a man who sincerely loves her, but whose sincerity she distrusts because she has money. Now a girl without money knows very well that when an offer is made her, she is loved only for herself. That feeling is worth more than the largest fortune, I should think."

"Girls," said I, "must find out the truth for themselves, as men have to do. Marriage is a game that takes two to play. The man has just as much right to suspect the girl's sincerity, as the girl has to suspect his. They ought, both of them, to be above suspicion. Loyalty begets loyalty. Where doubt is—
whoa!"

Here my horse stumbled, and I barely saved my hat from falling. The movement of my horse startled hers, and away we galloped. Talk was at an end between us; but though many of my faculties were engrossed by the labour of keeping my seat, I could still think. Was Theresa disappointed? Had she a worm i' the bud? What made her so sensitive about money? She talked very candidly; but then she knew I was in

love, and that knowledge conferred on us both privileges we could hardly have exercised had my affections been disengaged. What a change, *mon Dieu!* from the rude vixen of yesterday! I couldn't conceive a more agreeable girl than she. Considering that she must still be embarrassed by the memory of her behaviour to me, her ease was wonderful, her amiability delightful.

We had turned, by this time, into a long lane, with a tall hedge on either side of us, and plenty of trees, which, however, did not protect us from the sun. I have no doubt the country around looked very beautiful, and golden and green, with flashes of yellow light here, and splashes of some other kind of colour there—crammed, in a word, with a thousand effects, such as, properly catalogued

here, would entitle me to a place in English fiction second only to that occupied by the immortal author of Black's picturesque Guide Books. But to speak the truth, I was thinking too much about my neck to remark the beautiful and the lovely ; for my horse, on entering the lane, had indescribably shocked me by shying at an old man in a blouse, and from that moment I was afflicted with misgivings.

Happily the Ruins were at the end of the lane. We came to an open grassy space, my cousin halted, and pointed to some pieces of wall here and there, supporting what might have been the frame of a window in the reign of St. Lucius.

"Hallo ! a fire !" said I, imagining for the moment that here were the

remains of a house that had very nearly been burnt to the ground.

Teazer burst into a loud laugh, the merriest that ever made the summer air jocund with human glee.

"Why," cried she, "this is Blenhall Abbey, the most famous ruin in the county. I don't know how many books have been written about it."

"Oh, yes, I see the ivy now, and the green mould about the bricks."

"Some say it was built in the reign of Henry II., and some in Richard I.'s time. Two gentlemen belonging to a society came to visit it a few months ago, and afterwards called upon papa. That evening there was an argument. Papa's library was turned topsy-turvey to prove things. One gentleman in a passion smashed his spectacles by thumping his

fist on the table where they lay. The best part of it was, papa has a theory that the Abbey is of much more recent date, and declares he can show it was constructed in Queen Mary's time. You may imagine the hubbub! It ended in all three of them becoming enemies."

"Oh, those antiquarians!" I exclaimed. "They would wrangle for hours over a brick fresh from a kiln, one swearing it was made in the time of Agricola, and another that it was the work of those Israelites who built the pyramids. I call those ruins rubbish, don't you?"

Theresa shrugged her shoulders affirmatively. "But don't tell papa I think so," she exclaimed with a gay laugh, wheeling her horse round.

It was five o'clock when we sighted home. On the whole, in spite of the

heat and my nervousness, I had enjoyed the ride. Going up the hill, a gadfly had bitten my horse; the animal plunged, and I gave myself up for lost. The movement dislodged the fly, and the horse became calm; but feeling by the coolness in that part that my left leg showed its sock, I did not doubt that I had made a spectacle of myself. Judge my surprise when Teazer congratulated me upon the first-rate style in which I had handled the horse. She assured me I had saved him from falling with enviable coolness and address; and added that she was certain I was laughing at her when I pretended I couldn't ride! My conscience smarted, but I held my tongue. Thus, Eugenio, is honour heaped on the undeserving. Thus do muffs become great by the very ignorance that ought

to suppress them. Thus does the simpleton become a field-marshal, the ninny a bishop, the frump a privy-councillor, the sumph a court-physician.

My uncle was very jolly at dinner. He roared over my mistake about the ruins, and brought the tears to my eyes by his description of the two members of the antiquarian society. It was plain that both he and his daughter were striving might and main to make amends for the sufferings I had undergone on the previous day. Teazer, perhaps, was a little bashful, a little demure under her father's eye; but *he* was not to be resisted. I daresay a good many of his stories enriched the pages of Joe Miller; I daresay he had told them over and over again any time these twenty years. But what was that to me? What anecdotes he

had, he related well. He was so anxious, moreover, that I should be amused, that I more than once echoed his own kindly roar, when the best of his joke lay in his broad, honest, hearty, British expanse of face.

As to O'Twist, the man pained me with his officiousness. He was for ever at my ear, whispering with silvery softness, "A little more sherry, sir?" "I can ricommind this claret, sir;" "Will you throy the champeene, sir?" "Perhaps your honour would preefar the Meedeery?" I think he wanted to make me tipsy to show his remorse. He avoided looking at me from motives of memory and delicacy I could sincerely appreciate; but I could not move without bringing him to my side.

After dinner we went into the grounds, where coffee was brought us.

This is a pretty fine life for a banker's clerk! thought I, stretching back in an arm-chair and smoking one of my uncle's *Imperiales*, a cigar, Matilda, worth half-a-crown, as thick as your dainty wrist, and nearly ten inches long. Ten inches of bliss! *O crudele fuoco!* that so much leaf paradisaical should ever turn to innutritious ash!

Yesterday I should have expected Teazer to pull out a black cutty pipe, load it with cavendish tobacco, and call for a glass of rum. Now she sat in a low chair, her hands folded on her lap, quiet, attentive, gentle in aspect and manner, despite the bright flash that filled her eyes each time she raised them. I

thought of yesterday's comedy, the queer resolution that had prompted her, the histrionic ability that had fooled me. Were I to write such a story, I thought, who would believe me? It was one of those possible things that are incredible. Ghosts, murders, and bigamies, living burials, exhumations, and pushing-your-sweetheart's - husband - over - precipices, are events which happen every moment, which you may number among the sights you witness every time you take your walks abroad, and are therefore fit subjects for novel-writers to deal with. But that any young lady, calling herself a lady, could act——

Oh! Eugenio!—thou whom I have apostrophised so often, and may now publish thee no myth, but rather my bosom friend—thou knowest I am writing

true history; that Theresa *did* so receive me; that I *did* so undeceive her; that she *did* drop her nonsense, and become on a sudden a charming English lady, whom it was a rapture to look at, and a joy to listen to.

"Teazer," said I---

Here I halted, coughed, and said, "Have you any objection to my calling you by this familiar name?"

"Certainly not. My behaviour yesterday privileges you to find me an uglier title."

"It hits her character, doesn't it?" exclaimed her father. "I gave it her, and she shall wear it as long as she deserves it."

"I was going to ask you," said I, "to give me a proof of your pistolling powers."

"Make her give up that nonsense, Charlie," remarked my uncle.

"It is harmless enough," I replied.

"If the pistol don't burst. That is all I care about. However, Teazer, since your fame is concerned—for I remember boasting of your dexterity to Charlie, at Grove End—go and get the pistol and show him what you can do."

She went into the house, and after a short absence, returned with a pistol case, and a small worsted ball, to which a piece of thread was attached.

"Please go and hang this up for me on that rose tree there."

I took the ball and suspended it to a branch. She loaded her pistol very scientifically.

"Your white hand," said I, "entirely

robs the pistol of its murderous significance."

"Go and stand near the tree," she answered, "and then you'll see the thread cut."

She had sneered at my courage yesterday, and the wound still bled. That she might have no further occasion to doubt my prodigious valour, I took up a position so close to the tree that, had she suffered me to remain there, it would have been ten to one but I had received the ball. She guessed my motive, and called out laughingly, "Not so near: I *might* hit you!"

I stalked a few paces away, with a great air of nonchalance, as if I should say, "Pshaw! I am quite used to be shot at." She levelled her pistol. I looked at her.

"Watch the thread," she said. She

was twenty paces off. I fixed my eyes on the string—bang! a sharp, clear report, and down dropped the ball.

“Wonderful!” I exclaimed.

She came to the tree, re-affixed the ball, and, putting the pistol in my hand, asked me to shoot.

“I’ll try,” said I; “but you must keep behind me. Anybody within a hundred yards either side that tree would run the fearfulest risk. Winkle was a neater shot than I.”

I measured twenty paces, faced the tree, levelled the pistol, pulled the trigger, and by heaven! *the ball fell!*

Teazer stared: my uncle clapped his hands.

“You are a soldier’s son,” said he, “and ought to be able to shoot well. After that, Teazer, boast no more.”

I was now afraid that Teazer would challenge me to shoot again. Another fluke had added another leaf to the crown I felt sprouting about my brows : it would be a great blow to have the growth of that vegetation checked. But to my delight Theresa returned to her chair. I rather fancied that she felt somewhat ashamed of this amusement of hers. Perhaps because it was now associated with her conduct of the previous day ; and she would naturally not care to deal with so direct a reference to her rudeness.

This exploit of mine naturally persuaded them that I was a far more accomplished person than my modesty suffered me to represent ; and of course Theresa was sure that I could play and sing as well as I could shoot and ride.

"No, on my honour, I can't sing a note."

My uncle looked incredulous.

But you can play?" said Theresa.

"By ear only," I replied. "But I'll tell you what I can do, I can appreciate fine music and playing when I hear them, and as I am quite sure you are a good singer, you ought to oblige me by teaching me to forget your well-acted noises of yesterday."

"That's only fair," exclaimed my uncle.

So saying, he led the way to the drawing-room.

"What shall I sing?" asked Teazer, taking her place at the piano, and this time not knocking over the music stool.

"Whatever comes into your head," I answered.

"Anything not maudlin," said her father.

She reflected a moment, and then struck up a very simple, but a very sweet melody, which she accompanied with a voice remarkably pure and rich. Indeed, I never listened to any amateur whose voice I liked so well, nor to any song which gave me more pleasure.

"What a very pretty song," said I when she had finished.

"Old Kit Marlow's words, 'Come, live with me,' set by some eighteenth century composer," exclaimed my uncle.

"What a dreadful struggle it must have cost you to sing so badly," said I, looking at Theresa with a smile.

She coloured up and asked me if I knew—I forget the name of the piece: one of Chopin's, I think. I begged her

to play it; but though she went through it in dashing style, I can't say I was pleased. It was not music—there were no tunes in it. Here and there a little fragment of melody popped up and provoked the fingers into giving chase, but it invariably vanished among the growls of the bass, or finished with a scream amid the writhings and chatterings and shiverings of the treble. I was well aware that it was one of those pieces which the musical public pay half-a-guinea for sofa-stalls to hear, and so I seemed to applaud. That it was as little to my uncle's taste as mine, I had no doubt; but then it was his daughter who played it, and he couldn't be captious.

When she rose, he took her place, and made me laugh heartily over his imitation of the Italian opera. He was a capital

mimic—struck his breast and clenched his fist as the basso—shrugged his shoulders, and elevated his arm to heaven, as the tenor—squeaked and wailed as the prima donna; and concluded with a duet, making the oddest noises with his mouth, in excellent imitation of a violoncello. This done, he bowed to the room, and pretended to collect bouquets.

I passed the rest of the evening in playing double-dummy with him, while Theresa sat near us, sometimes reading, but more often watching the game.

CHAPTER IX.

"The circulating hours dividing
"Twixt reading, walking, eating, riding."

Jenyns.

A REGULAR account of my doings during my stay at uncle Dick's house would be rather wearisome. It would be a different matter if I had the ability to make the record as pleasant as the experience.

One or two neighbours were disposed to be friendly ; but unfortunately, they were people Theresa didn't care about. My kind-hearted uncle appeared to regret

the general want of cordiality for my sake.

"In other places," he said, "some kind of fun is always to be got; pic-nics, lawn-parties, and so forth. But the utmost civilities we are accustomed to, here, are sometimes a bow, and at long intervals, a visit."

I assured him that I wanted no other and no better society than himself and his daughter.

"Still," said he, "I should like to have given a party of some kind for you. But if I wanted to fill my rooms, I should have to hunt for my guests in the highways and under the hedges. There are not half-a-dozen creatures in the district to whom I would offer a glass of wine."

"English society appears to me intolerably exclusive."

“Ay,” he answered, “your self-made men know that. In the provinces there is nothing harder to get than society. A man must live in a place half his life before he can gather people about him, and then his antecedents must be unimpeachable. Provincial society consists of coteries, all absurdly jealous and suspicious of intruders. I parted with some pleasant friends when I left ——; but how many years I shall have to live here before the people whose acquaintance is desirable will honour me with their friendship I cannot imagine. Money will not bring society, and mere respectability takes time to make itself known. Nothing but a title or unquestionable aristocratic connexions bring people about you at once. Ah! we’re a sad set of toadies in this country; and yet, though

I occasionally grumble, I am satisfied that society should remain as it is. The social successes of moneyed interlopers have done a great deal, since I was a boy, to demoralise the tone of English society. The world is lumbered with parvenus; and though I am a City man myself, I am conservative enough in my views of life never to regret any illustration, on the part of society, of a resolution to resist the encroachments of the City."

"Getting into Parliament seems a good way of getting into society," said I.

"The great way. I will venture to say that a third of the members of the House sit for social, not for political, aims, of which they know nothing. However, I never hear of some notorious company-monger, some rascal the very

magnitude of whose robberies preserves him from the law, getting into Parliament, without consoling myself with the reflection that there is a special constituency of blackguards in this country whose interests ought to be represented as well as those of the honester classes, and that the swindler, the company-maker, the Stock Exchange hocusser, are the right men for it."

Yet in spite of my uncle's reasoning, his neighbours were not more to blame than he was for unsociability. He was so good-hearted a man, so excellent a host, so cheerful and amiable a companion, that he could have found no difficulty in procuring friends had he made the effort. In truth, neither he nor his daughter cared for society. They were both easily bored, as I noticed once when

some people called. These people were fresh from London, and could talk of nothing but the impertinences of the season. My uncle laughed at them when they were gone, and asked me what manner of sin he should commit in order to expiate the perpetration of entertaining such people at his house?

The letter I had written to Conny remained unanswered. Every hour of the days that followed, I looked forward to receiving her answer. Her silence mortified me. I thought her cruel to neglect me, knowing what my feelings were. I pored over her picture, afflicting my common sense with all manner of silly questions. She had given me quite enough encouragement to lead me to believe that she was very nearly in love with me, and what I wanted to know was,

Was she a flirt? and had she humoured my passion only to make an ass of me?

I had confidently reckoned upon receiving an answer to my letter. Had her father forbidden her to write? No; that was improbable. He certainly would not wish her to treat me with rudeness. I grew jealous, uneasy, angry. Suppose all the time she had been allowing me to make love to her, she was pledged to Curling, was corresponding with him, was meeting him! How detestable to be tricked! How odious to pour your soft adoration into the ears of a woman who is laughing in her sleeve at your nonsense, and thinking, at the very moment you consider yourself most eloquent, how much better the other fellow expresses the same sentiments!

Lovers can never be ridiculous in each other's eyes, if both are in earnest. But if one is insincere, then the other is inevitably absurd. So two mad people explaining to each other, the one his claims to the English throne, the other his claims to the moon as a family estate, listen with gravity, embrace with sympathy, and part with mutual admiration. But a lunatic, talking his nonsense to a sane man, is pitied and despised.

Oh, who that has been in love hasn't suffered? Where is he? I would walk ten miles on the hottest July day to behold him. I say, it is impossible to love and not to suffer. Thy goddess is a divinity hedged about with furze, and whatever be thy fortune with her, inevitably art thou bound to carry away

scars and blisters and wounds. Nay, madam, I never said that these sufferings, these agonies, were confined to one sex. *You* take your share; *you*, too, have your lacerations, your sleepless nights, your heavy eyelids. There is a Jack for every Jill—a Jill for every Jack. But do your sufferings mitigate ours? Does Sylvia weeping over Alexis' cruel marriage with Phyllis, comfort Phœbus, who blubbers over Delia's engagement to Hylas? Oh, this is a vale of tears! let us silence recrimination—and weep, if not in each other's arms, at least for one another.

Nobody knows—nobody ever will know—and nobody had better ask—how I suffered (intermittently) whilst I waited for the letter I never got. “She doesn't care for me!” I would cry. “She is in

love with Curling. She has forgotten my very name. Or worse, she remembers me only to divert that rascally cashier, whom she meets, God knows how and where, with demure travesties of my pretty whispers." And then—my imagination being always briskest when I was saddest, resembling a cat, that is friskiest at night—up would spring a vision: Conny with her sweet, deep eyes, her shining tresses, her adorable little figure, made love to by Curling, of the frizzy hair and pigeon-pie-shaped bosom; watching him (faugh!) with the divinest meaning in those eyes, into whose depths I had so often gazed, and gazed, and gazed, and still found nothing but a vacuum of moist and lambent blue! Then, Eugenio, would I clench my hands, and grind my teeth; then would I consign Mr.

Curling's soul to Mephistopheles, and hold an Imaginary Conversation with the faithless one, superior in wit, nature, satire, and the received beauties, to anything ever written by Savage Landor; in which I would now wither her with sarcasms, and now revive her with splendid entreaties, now overwhelm her with contempt, and now restore her with the most luxuriant tenderness.

Did you never indulge in these mental strifes? Then you have never been in love. Who that has been in love has not morally wrestled with his goddess, as fanatically as ever Luther wrestled with the Devil? Don't say *you trusted her*. Don't outrage experience by pretending that you always had the most unbounded confidence in her. You know you hadn't. You know when you left her for a week,

that you thought, that day, of the party she was going to next evening, of the men she would meet there, of the waltzes she would dance there, of the conservatory she would retire to. Again, when you were miles away, don't you remember thinking: "To-day is Lady Sloper's picnic; Aurelia is going; she will meet that beast Lovall; she will come home by moonlight in a crowded vehicle, the beast Lovall at her side, while her mamma, her only protector, slumbers a mile behind in the slow omnibus." Pshaw! he that writes this has gone through it all, and what consolation, fellow-sufferers, has he to offer you? Dean Swift said of the weather, "I never remember any weather not too hot or too cold, too wet or too dry; but, however God Almighty contrives it,

at the end of the year 'tis all very well."

So of love; at the end of the year 'tis all very well.

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